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# THE NEW RACE OF DEVILS

BY  
JOHN BERNARD



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THE

# NEW RACE OF DEVILS

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BY  
JOHN BERNARD

LONDON:  
ANGLO-EASTERN PUBLISHING COMPANY, Ltd.,  
48/50, WATERLOO ROAD, S.E. 1

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## PREFACE.

By W. N. WILLIS.

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"O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

HAMLET, *Act I. Sc. 5.*

THE author of this book, "*The New Race of Devils*," was for years interned in Germany as a close prisoner of war. His scientific knowledge, his enthusiasm for research, caused the Germans to fear him; but the very cause of this fear gave him friends from the inner circle, or secret bodies of German scientists. From the intercourse and communion he was enabled to have with the latter, he gathered together the startling facts set out in this book.

This work is woven around the Germans' temperamental hatred of their conquerors, and shows their professors, subordinating science to patriotism, laboriously experimenting to breed, by insemination, a race of men but one stage removed from the Gorilla of the bosom of darkest Africa—a new race of devils bred scientifically and relentlessly for the one purpose, revenge upon their enemies.

This book bristles with scientific data in regard to the

horrible possibilities of producing a race of human creatures apart from Nature's way of reproduction. And the writer forecasts that, when another decade shall have come and gone, the world will be startled by an entirely new race, science-created—a race from whom the best that is inherent in humanity shall have been sternly eliminated, and the latent cruelty, tyranny, violence and selfishness developed and intensified.

A hint is given by the eminent scientists who foregathered at Cardiff in August last as to the coming of the phenomenon of breeding by insemination. To-day tests are being carried out in this country with startling results. But these are experiments with the procreation of animals, not men, whereas in Germany the experiments are with human beings, and have gone far beyond the initial stage. The new race of devils is being deliberately bred in order to satisfy the Germans' insatiable hunger to tear, wolf-like, at the entrails of Fair France, and then to bury their fangs deep in our own land. Those who believe that the German hatred and jealousy of us died a sudden death with the Armistice are indeed living in a fools' paradise, and should awaken themselves from their sense of false security by reading this book by one who has an inner knowledge not only of the German character individually, but of the Fatherland's ruthless determination to make the Allies suffer, by any means in its power, for the humiliation of its present position.

All intellectual and patriotic men and women should read this book, which will unfold to them what is to-day con-

sidered to be weird, impossible, unthinkable, but which will, we are assured, in fifty years from now be looked upon as merely an accepted fact, much in the same way as we now regard electricity, aeroplanes, and submarines.

The book is in novel form, and, although its message may seem incredible to the lay mind, as were the works of Jules Verne in the middle of last century, it nevertheless foreshadows the truth that must eventually appear, to the wonderment of Man.

It was, I think, Josephus, who said:

*"There is nothing new under the sun."*

If the Jewish historian were wandering on the surface of the earth to-day, he would have to admit that the breeding of a species of devil-man to the especial requirements of science and a fanatic, perverted patriotism, is something quite new; and if that distinguished writer of ancient times could have followed the experiments in insemination as the author of this book has done, he might have exclaimed to mankind—

"This is not only quite new, but quite true."

Quite apart from the patriotic point of view, there is immense interest in this book for those who are fascinated by Anthropology, and who among us is not, in one way or another? As Pope said long ago: "*The proper study of mankind is Man.*" Anyone with a little imagination can see what tremendous possibilities lie in the direction of scientific insemination. Good qualities may be brought out

or accentuated, while bad ones may be influenced or totally eliminated, in one generation, once scientific breeding is adopted. For instance, our troglodyte (or cave-dwelling) ancestors have bequeathed us a mentality of which violence seems an integral part. In spite of centuries of advancement since troglodyte times, outbursts, such as the recent War illustrates, take place among us; and the essential cave-dwellers' principle "Might is right!" even yet holds sway in human hearts. It is conceivable that Science may yet triumph over the troglodyte inherent within us by freeing the race from the Will to Violence and Brutality. Again, there are those who declare our ancestry to have been hylobatic, or ape-like. And to this remote influence we owe that cunning, which, intensified, is criminality. How wonderful to be able to eliminate the criminal from our midst when we shall have perfected what is now only the germ of an idea!

Let none among us be sceptical, when we have the testimony of the leading scientists of the day to the effect that there is a marvellous future before this particular branch of scientific research and experiment. As Professor Stanley Gardiner stated before the British Association in August of this year:

*"The experimental reproduction of animals without the interposition of the male is immensely interesting; where it will lead, no one can foretell."*

## PROLOGUE.



1915.

A WOMAN was being tried for her life—tried for the murder of her child.

She stood in the dock, gazing defiantly at those assembled there to judge and to condemn her. She was young, with a face bearing the stamp of a fierce, almost virile beauty, a figure whose lines, even under the ill-fitting black dress, bespoke the perfection of nature's handiwork, the full beauty of womanhood, a being whom Nature had planned to bear strong, straight-limbed children, splendid men for the glorification of the race. The perfect mother incarnate—yet she was standing here on trial for the murder of her man-child! What strange riddle was this?

The judge turned to address the prisoner.

"Elsa Heiliger," he said slowly, "you stand here convicted of the most revolting, the most heinous crime of which a woman can be accused, that of taking the life of your own child. I ask you, before God and before man, are you guilty or not guilty?"

The woman looked around the crowded court, and then began to speak in a low, tense voice.

"Guilty? Yes, guilty if you choose to call it so; but I ask you, who is the more guilty—I, who loved my babe and killed him, killed him with these hands before he should

grow to man's estate, to know the joy of life, and to rejoice in the blue sky, in the sun, in the wonderful world, or you, who would have let me keep him until, in the first bloom of his manhood, you claimed him for cannon-fodder, leaving his mangled body on the blood-soaked battlefields? I ask you again, who is more guilty, you or I? You may condemn me as a murderess, but, before God, *you* are the murderers, not I! Don't you think I loved my child? From the first moment I felt his little fluttering life within me I worshipped him. He was mine, my flesh and blood, my life, and I longed for my child to be born. Two days after he was born they brought me the news that my man was dead, killed in that hell before Verdun. He had died for his country, they said; and told me I should be proud of him.

"Proud! Proud because my husband, the father of my child, lay rotting in France, one of the thousands massacred to satisfy a buffoon's vanity! And when I heard that, I swore that you should not have his son to slaughter like a poor dumb beast; and so that evening I held him close to me and kissed him, and then I placed my hand over his little mouth. To save him from you, I took away what I had given—his life. God, and God only, knows if I did wrong in killing my child. But I loved him so that I could not let him live to suffer. God gave me my child; to save him from your power in the future I gave him back to God."

There was a deep silence as Elsa Heiliger finished speaking. Then a confused murmur broke out.

"The woman is mad. They should not have allowed her to speak!" several men cried.

"She is right," shouted a woman's voice in the crowd. "Why should we bear sons for the nation to slaughter?"

A murmur of approval greeted this remark. The voices in the crowd grew more angry and menacing.

General von Heinemann, seated near the judge, bent over and whispered to him:

"This must be stopped at once; order the court to be cleared. In a moment the people will get out of hand."

The judge made a sign.

"Silence!" cried the usher, "or the court will be cleared at once."

The cries subsided, and only a dull muttering was heard, which soon died away altogether. Then the witnesses were called. There were only two, and both told the same story. The judge turned and addressed the jury.

"Gentlemen, you have heard what these witnesses have said. The woman, on her own avowal, committed the crime. It is for you to judge whether the sentence of death should be passed."

For a few minutes the foreman and his colleagues whispered together; then he turned to the judge.

"We judge this woman not only guilty of breaking the law," he said in cold, detached tones, "but guilty of a crime towards the Fatherland; and we demand that sentence of death be passed."

A moan went up from the crowd.

"Assassins!" shrieked a woman's voice. "You kill our sons; and if we would save them from you we are condemned as murderers!"

"Silence!" again commanded the usher.

The whole court seemed to seethe with white angry faces. Only the condemned woman in the dock remained unmoved.

An unearthly look was in her eyes. One could imagine that she had already left all earthly trials and tribulations behind her. She did not even turn to face the judge as the dread sentence was pronounced. Her eyes were fixed on the

open window of the court, through which the setting sun was tingeing everything with a crimson glow.

Only when the warder touched her on the shoulder to lead her away did she seem to remember where she was. Then she turned, and pointing to the fiery sunset cried:

“Blood! Blood everywhere! Do you see how all is soaked in blood?”

Her fingers tore at the collar of her dress, and with a dreadful laugh she fell senseless to the ground.

# The New Race of Devils

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## PART I.

### The Mother.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE General looked across at his companions and frowned.

"The situation *has* to be faced," he said moodily. "A few more cases like that of Elsa Heiliger and the germs of revolution will spread; the voices of the people are growing louder in our ears every day."

A tall young man in the uniform of the Death's Head Hussars laughed dryly.

"Certainly, my dear General, it *must* be stopped," he agreed. "Only to-day a woman of the people cried 'Murderer' at me as I passed. Those *canaille* *must* be stopped; but how? Our strength lies in our unity. Once the voices of these women are heard above the crowd our power will fail."

For a few minutes there was silence. Then a short, thick-set man, with a Bismarckian type of face, rose to his feet.

"Your Highness," he began, speaking slowly, "is right when he says that our strength lies in our unity. Up to now we have proved to the civilized world that we are almost supermen. Our armies are encamped on the banks of the Somme. Belgium, Serbia, Poland, and Roumania are

nothing but provinces belonging to the great German Empire. Our greatest foe, England, acknowledges that by force of arms Germany can never be vanquished. But—there is a worm already eating at the root of our greatness. Day by day the canker is spreading; and what is this canker, Highness? It is the women of Germany, the women who are demanding back the lives of their men. Your Highness, it must be stopped; this cursed maternal instinct must be killed. We must create a race who are indeed supermen—men and women within whom the sentiments of sex are dead; soulless beings whose brains are only developed in one direction—to hate; to whom the ordinary weaknesses that assail mankind are unknown, who have no law, no religion, no belief but the Fatherland! Till then, and not till then, can we realize the dream of the superman. 'We will create a race of Gods, and the wings of the German eagle shall spread unto the uttermost ends of the earth!'

The Prince sprang to his feet, his face twitched with excitement, and his hand grasped nervously at the hilt of his sword.

"A great idea, Baron! But the accomplishment?" he cried.

The Baron coughed dryly.

"Your Highness has perhaps heard of Dr. Frederick Werner, Professor of Bacteriology at the University of Jena?" he asked. "Some months ago the professor resigned his appointment at the University to devote all his time to his experiments, based on Weiseman's theory, that it is possible to create, by judicious selection, superior races of animals, plants, and even human beings. He maintains that it is possible to create a race which will be superior to and stronger than any race at present on the globe, because,

according to his theory of selection, this race will be free

from the usual weaknesses to which the human family is prone, free from all those humane instincts which weaken the *moral* of the present generation. According to the professor, these instincts are transmitted to us at the moment of conception, when our creators are dominated by love, passion, lust, what you will. The most primitive hereditary feelings are thus passed to the embryo, and a being is brought into the world, already inoculated with these poisons. Now Herr Werner maintains that if sexual emotion played no part in the conception of the human embryo, a superior race would be the result. And how does he propose to produce this result? By fecundation *without* the union of the sexes; in other words, by inoculation. Our task will be simply the selection of the fittest. Naturally, it will be difficult at first; but with patience the result will be there, and in twenty years' time there will be a race of men in Germany who will be masters of the world! And you must remember another thing, your Highness, that the fact alone of possessing such men will render us superior to all our present enemies, for the children that are born of this war will be poor weaklings, and the next generation of men and women in Europe will be a degenerate race. Even here in Germany, the average man or woman of the next generation will be a useless creature, capable only of producing children without constitution, many of whom will die in infancy. But if the professor's idea can be carried out, as I believe it can, we shall be armed against this danger, and we shall be masters by the right of force and superiority."

The Prince rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Such an idea would have to be put into practice in absolute secrecy," he said. "If the people got wind of anything of the kind, it would lead to an immediate revolution. Our agents would have to be everywhere, and, as

far as possible, the subjects themselves would have to be kept unaware of the nature of the experiment that had been practised upon them."

"And how would you propose to educate the children born of these experiments?" asked a tall, fair man in the uniform of the Uhlans. "If left to their parents, the result in the end would be exactly what we are trying to avoid now."

"The majority could be taken over by the State," said the Baron. "As the people are always crying out that they cannot now feed or clothe their children, it would merely appear to be an extremely generous act of the government's to feed, clothe, and educate a certain number of children in each district of the Empire. We would naturally arrange that the children taken were *the experiments*."

Von Hartweg, the man in the Uhlan uniform, looked doubtfully at the Baron.

"I can hardly believe that such a thing is possible," he said. "But if it should be, I would be only too willing to help you by every means in my power."

The Baron grasped his hand.

"Thank you, Major von Hartweg," he said heartily. "If you will come with me to-morrow evening, you shall hear for yourself what Professor Werner has to say on the matter, for he arrived in Berlin last night. Highness," he turned to the Prince, "have I your full permission to act as I think fit in the matter?"

The Prince held out his hand.

"My dear Baron," he said, "it all sounds a little fantastic; but, if it were possible, the results would be so far-reaching that they would more than justify my giving you my authorization in writing to do all you think best for the furtherance of this idea. I will give it to you now, to the furtherance of the glory of the German Empire."

## CHAPTER II.

THE next evening Major von Hartweg accompanied the Baron to the Grand Hotel, where Werner was staying. The professor received them cordially, and after dinner, in his own private sitting-room, they began to discuss the reason of their visit.

"Major von Hartweg wished to meet you, Werner, because he is rather dubious as to the practicability of your theories," said the Baron. "If you can convince him, however, he is willing to help us in any way."

The professor looked at von Hartweg thoughtfully.

"I can quite understand," he said, "that, to a man like yourself, the idea, on its first presentment, appears absurd and fantastic. Yet, when you clearly understand my theory, there is nothing impossible about it. It is based on a perfectly sound and logical theory of eugenics."

"You believe, then, that the character of a person is absolutely the result of the influence at work *before* birth?" asked von Hartweg.

"In the essential points, yes. A child in later years may develop certain characteristics of its own, though these are generally found to 'throw back' to some former ancestor if you take the trouble to trace them. But the dominating forces of character are entirely the result of the education, shall we say, it receives *before* its birth. The primitive passions of the human race are transmitted to the embryo at the moment of impregnation; and that is where my experiment will come in, for if it succeeds (as I have no doubt it

will) I shall produce a human creature from whom all primitive sentiments and passions are entirely eliminated. My men and women will be free from all moral and physical weakness."

"And have you been able to find suitable subjects for your experiments?" asked von Hartweg.

"Amongst the peasants, who must of necessity be the material I shall have to work on in general, many. But I want to find a perfect specimen of womanhood, and yet one, at the same time, in whom the sexual instinct is not developed, or very slightly developed."

The Baron raised his eyebrows.

"That is rather a big order, my dear Werner," he said.

The professor shook his head.

"Not so difficult as you imagine," he replied. "If you had studied men and women as much as I have, you would know that in many women the purely sexual instincts are almost nil. The majority of young girls are in love with love, that is to say, with their ideal of love, with romance; and the first man who in any way approaches their ideal, if he knows how to touch the right key, receives their adoration. At that age, the question of sex hardly enters into the question. In nine cases out of ten a girl gives herself to a man out of curiosity. Once that is satisfied, if the affair has ended in marriage, she will look on the conjugal union as a disagreeable obligation pertaining to matrimony, if she does not actually regard it with repulsion. Then, of course, there is another type which is very common, the sensual and vicious woman. She is usually found in the woman of more mature age. Then we have the mercenary woman, who sells herself to the highest bidder, and in whom all sexual feelings are practically dead. That is the type

I want to find for my first experiment. She must, of course, also be perfectly healthy physically, and a very beautiful creature. I want the result to be as near as possible the perfect man, without any of his weaknesses."

"And where do you think it will be possible to find such a woman?" asked the Baron. "The mercenary type you describe is certainly to be found in its thousands; but the perfect woman is rare, especially among that class."

"If I understand you correctly, professor," put in von Hartweg, who had been listening to Werner with the closest attention, "you want to find a woman who will make the perfect mother?"

The professor nodded.

"Exactly," he said. "There are many beautiful women in the world, who are no more capable of bearing splendid children than the most misshapen cripple is. What we must look for is the consummately perfect woman, which is only another way of saying The Perfect Potential Mother. For woman's destiny is maternity, and that destiny predominates over her, even against her will. That is why women can rarely reach any great height if they try to enter other spheres, for in putting aside motherhood they are going against nature and their natural destiny."

There was a silence for a few moments, then von Hartweg leaned forward eagerly.

"What you have said, professor, has interested me profoundly, and I see that if the result should be what you anticipate, it will be of enormous benefit to the Fatherland. Now I have a proposal to make. Will you leave it to me to find the subject for your first experiment? And, in the event of its turning out successfully, I will undertake to bring up the child as though it were my own, following closely all your ideas as to its education, and making it

(should it be a boy) a fitting leader of others for the glory of our country. I am a wealthy man, with no ties. I am willing to devote all I have, not only to the one child, but to the establishment of institutions for the upbringing and education of others; and I shall be more than satisfied if, in twenty years' time, I can see an army of real supermen existing in Germany."

The professor looked at him keenly.

"Your offer is most generous, Major von Hartweg," he said, "and I cannot do less than accept it in the interests of the Fatherland. I also am devoting all I have to the furtherance of my idea."

"And what about the female children who may result from your experiments?" queried the Baron.

"They will be of almost greater importance than the males," answered the professor, "for they will be placed in special institutions, and at a proper age will themselves be used as creatures of reproduction on the same lines. From them I hope to produce the ideal race; if only ten per cent. of the children born correspond to my idea we shall be the strongest nation in the world."

"And the *man* for your first experiment? Have you found him?" asked von Hartweg.

"With regard to that, I have been more fortunate than I dared hope." The professor's eyes gleamed with excitement as he proceeded. "He is a fisherman from a remote village on the Baltic, a man of magnificent physique, who has lived on the sea all his life. He has a constitution of iron, is perfectly healthy, and absolutely without culture of any kind, not even capable of signing his name."

An expression of doubt crossed Major von Hartweg's face.

"I should be a little afraid of such a type," he said.

"These fishermen, uncultivated though they may be, have the poetry of the sea in their souls. They hear things that we cannot hear, and see things to which we are blind."

The professor laughed irritatingly.

"I can assure you that *this* man has no poetry in what you term his soul," he sneered. "He is an absolute beast in every respect; he is now lying in a prison not a stone's throw from here, condemned to twenty years' hard labour for the most gross acts of insubordination. It was by chance I heard of him from Frederick Stern, the sculptor, who wanted him as a model; but the military authorities refused. However, when I went with an order from the Emperor the whole thing was made easy. After I have done with him he will be set at liberty; that is to say, he will be sent back to the front, where he will soon disappear. In any way, it will certainly be arranged that he does not return here to speak."

Von Hartweg shrugged his shoulders.

"You know best, of course, professor," he admitted, "but, personally, I should have chosen any subject but a man of the sea. Can't you find some other man who will do as well?"

The professor glanced at the speaker impatiently.

"I tell you the man is *perfect* in every respect; I might have to wait months or years before I found such an ideal type of manhood. As to his possessing a soul—well, if such a thing exists, it is certainly missing in this Baltic fisherman. If he ever had one he must have drowned it years ago in vodka. Why, the last time he was sentenced he was dreadfully, madly drunk, smashing up everything within his reach. It took six men to hold him down. They said he had been steadily drinking for a week; what he had taken would have

killed any ordinary man, but with his constitution he might as well have been drinking water. I tell you the man is nothing but a magnificent beast, who will suit our purpose splendidly."

Von Hartweg threw his cigar into the fire and rose to his feet.

"So be it," he said. "If you are satisfied I have nothing more to say. Time alone can prove what the result will be."

## CHAPTER III.

It was almost ten o'clock before the cabaret began to fill up. In the cheaper back part there were a fair number of people sitting at the tables with glasses of beer before them, their white faces straining forward as they gazed eagerly through the thin curtain of smoke so as not to lose anything of what was passing on the little stage at the far end of the hall, where an enormously stout woman was singing a *chansonnette* from a popular revue.

The song and the artiste were evidently favourites, for the singer was loudly encored; and she made a sign to the Kapelle Meister at the piano to strike up another song, glancing up laughingly at the gallery which ran round the hall. This gallery was what was termed the Wine Stube, because no beer was served, and you could order nothing less than a bottle of wine. Little tables were set closely together, and groups of officers, generally accompanied by overdressed women of the underworld, were seated eating and drinking. The artistes, after doing their turns, came up here and mixed freely with the diners, sitting down at a table when the fancy took them, rising a few minutes later to go to another, or to greet some acquaintance.

Everybody appeared to be on the best of terms with the stout woman who was singing, and as she left the stage she was uproariously invited by different groups to come upstairs and join them. A few minutes later she was seated at a table occupied by two officers in mufti and a dark-haired woman of the Bavarian type.

"Well, Betty, how is the world treating you these days?" asked one of the men, filling up her glass. Then, lifting his own glass, he glanced at his three companions meaningly.

"Prosit!" he said ceremoniously, before drinking. The others followed suit. Then Betty turned towards him.

"What did you ask me? How the world is treating me? What a question to ask when all one *can* do is just exist! Soon I doubt if that will be left us to do, with everything at famine prices and the directors cutting down our salaries every month. If it were not for some of our good friends, like yourself, the Berlin cabarets would soon have to close down. We are not all so lucky as Lotta Wendt. She naturally never wants for anything!" A bitter sneer distorted Betty's habitually good-natured face.

"Lotta Wendt?" echoed the fair man who had spoken before. "The *diva* who is making her first appearance here to-night?"

"Yes," answered Betty, attacking a plate of sandwiches which a waitress had just placed before her. "She is a 'find' of Stein's. No one knows where she comes from, or where he picked her up; but it's evident that he is crazy about her. It remains to be seen how long his fancy will last. Ah, there he is now, so I suppose the Wendt has just come in, for he is always at her heels. And there is Berliner-blau! I didn't know *he* was on leave—and little Fritz is with him. We used to call them Romeo and Juliet before the war. I must go and speak to them. I'll see you again before my second turn."

And without further ceremony Betty got up and waddled off between the lines of tables. The fair man looked after her reflectively.

"Wonderful creature, that," he said; "no voice, no talent, and yet she gets there and knows everybody. By the way,

Toni, do you know anything about the Wendt?" he added, addressing the woman seated opposite to him.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Little more than Betty told you," she answered indifferently, "except that she is a bad artiste, absolutely lacking in temperament. But she is certainly the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. She made her first appearance at the Cabaret Germania in Frankfurt two years ago, and would certainly have been hissed off as an artiste if her looks and magnificent appearance had not saved her. Rumour says she was a painters' model in Munich before the war. Now Stein has taken her up she'll get on, though how she can 'stand' the beast, I don't know. Look at him now!"

The three turned and looked at the group which a few minutes before Betty had joined.

Berlinerblau was a tall dark man, with a face which, in repose, was of a somewhat forbidding and brutal cast. At the moment he was laughing at a remark made by his companion, a slight, effeminate-looking boy of not more than twenty years of age, in the uniform of a sub-Lieutenant of Hussars. The two seemed engrossed in each other's conversation, and took absolutely no notice of the third man, Stein, who was talking to Betty.

There was no possibility of mistaking Stein's race. The heavy sensual features, pendulous mouth, and thick curling hair, all betokened the Hebrew blood, which his short squat figure further emphasised. Certainly not the man to capture a woman's fancy, as Toni had declared; there was something utterly repelling in his whole bearing and appearance. At the moment the three turned to look at him, he was laughing loudly at some coarse witticism he had perpetrated at Betty's

expense, while he amused himself in rolling some large round wafer biscuits across the table to his two companions. But they were much too taken up with each other to notice, until one more adroitly aimed fell right on to the boy Fritz's knee. Berlinerblau turned round angrily.

"Why the devil can't you leave the boy alone?" he cried, his eyes blazing across at Stein.

The latter burst into a loud guffaw. "Isn't the darling able to defend himself?" he laughed. "I should put him in petticoats, and get a nurse for him if I were you."

The boy's face crimsoned up to his blonde hair, and his hands clenched each other tightly. One could see the hot words rising to his lips; and assuredly an explosion would have followed, if a diversion had not been created by the appearance at the top of the stairs of a woman, who stood for a moment looking down the lines of tables as though searching for someone.

She was tall, and the lines of her figure, under the folds of the soft grey dress she wore, were quite perfect. Her corsage was cut outrageously low, and showed to its full advantage the beauty of her shoulders and bust. A sapphire necklace was clasped round her neck, and ended in a pendant formed by one large, beautifully-cut sapphire. Her features were small and regular, and, under the make-up, one would have judged her eyes to be a deep blue. In reality they were grey; her hair was almost black, but with strange, elusive, red lights running through it. The large black hat she wore, trimmed with two ospreys, seemed to add a subtle charm to her face. Yet the charm was spoilt by the expression of cold insolence with which she scanned the tables—an expression which changed to a half-cynical smile of contempt as her eyes fell on the table occupied by Stein and his companions. She walked slowly towards them.

"Lotta Wendt!" The name was whispered from table to table. The fair-haired man drew a long breath.

"The woman I have been searching for!" he muttered to himself. Then, turning to Toni, he said, "The Wendt seems rather an unusual type. She interests me. If you will allow me, I will go and join Stein's party for a few minutes."

## CHAPTER IV.

THREE hours later the people were crowding out of the cabaret, and only a few men lingered behind in the gallery to exchange a last few words with the artistes.

Lotta Wendt was leaning over the balcony talking to von Hartweg, the fair man. Her turn had met with sufficient success, but judging from her expression, she was angry and dissatisfied.

"You can see for yourself," she was saying, in answer to some remark von Hartweg had made, "it was for this, and these," touching her dress and the sapphire necklace contemptuously, "that they applauded me. But for these, and the fact that they know Stein is behind me, they would have thought nothing of hissing me off. I know that my voice is only passable, and that all I have to carry me through is my appearance. The day I lose that——" She paused and shrugged her shoulders expressively.

Von Hartweg bent down and scanned her closely.

"Surely you could have found something better than Stein?" he said, speaking slowly.

She gave a short laugh.

"Stein answers my purpose as well as any other man," she answered. "He is no better nor worse than any of you."

Von Hartweg lifted his hand in protest.

"But, my dear girl," he expostulated, "you are beautiful, and to that you add an irresistible fascination—you are young. Surely amongst all the men who must naturally

have flocked round you there was one who would have filled Stein's present *rôle*—for love!"

A look of contempt and disgust crept into Lotta Wendt's eyes.

"Love!" she echoed. "Don't talk to *me* of love! I loathe the very name. It has been dinned into my ears ever since I was old enough to take a man's fancy. Love!" She laughed contemptuously. "It is the word you men have ever on your lips, which you repeat, parrot-like, to every woman who takes your fancy. 'I love you,' you say; and in your hearts you are thinking: 'This woman is beautiful, I want her to be mine, if it is only for an hour. Perhaps afterwards she will not interest me. But for the moment I desire her above everything else.' Of course, it would appear a little crude to tell us this at once, so you place on the distorted features of lust the mask of love, and you come and whisper in our ears the lie 'I love you.' And some of us poor fools believe you. Oh, how I hate it all, this prating of love! What is the true meaning of the whole thing? This so-called love is nothing but one of nature's tricks by which she fools women into assisting in her scheme for the continuance of the human race!"

Von Hartweg laughed.

"You are original, Fräulein Wendt," he said, "but rather hard on my sex. To speak as you do, you must have loved very much at some time, and, I fear, unhappily."

Lotta Wendt looked at him with scorn in her eyes.

"In this case your psychology plays you false, my friend," she replied. "I have heard and seen too much of this tender and delicious passion ever to allow myself to become its victim. My father, a Frenchman, loved my mother so very dearly that he left her to starve in the streets of Paris with

her two babies. Men call me beautiful. My sister was more beautiful than I. In Munich a man 'loved' her. Last month she died in a hospital in Vienna, such a loathsome, corrupt thing that even those who attended on her turned away in horror. No, Major von Hartweg, I have never loved—I have only hated."

She stopped and turned round. Stein had come up and was speaking to her.

"Berlinerblau and little Fritz want us to go on to supper with them. Will you come?" he was asking. 'They will also be delighted if Major von Hartweg will join us,' he added, smiling affably at Lotta's companion.

Von Hartweg glanced at the woman; her face bore no trace of the bitterness and passion which had marred it a moment before. She stood there cold and beautiful, with her habitual air of indifference to everything around her.

"Thank you; I shall be delighted to join you," he said, and offered his arm to Lotta.

## CHAPTER V.

THREE weeks later von Hartweg was seated in the drawing-room of Lotta Wendt's extravagantly-furnished flat, which Carl Stein's money had procured for her. The maid had gone to announce him to her mistress; and as he sat there looking round the room, he was struck by the inharmonious contrasts. One would suppose that two or three beings of totally different tastes had had a hand in the furnishing and adorning of the room. This was particularly noticeable in the pictures. Here was an almost priceless etching hung side by side with a picture-postcard atrocity framed in a "loud" gilt frame. In another part of the room a delicious Greuze was placed next to a water-colour depicting a scene on the Rhine which even an indifferent student in a school of art would be ashamed to produce. But three pictures arrested von Hartweg's attention particularly. They were hung by themselves, and were evidently favourites, for no postcard or oleograph horror kept them company.

They depicted three of the most horrible forms of Oriental torture, and, hardened as von Hartweg was, he could not repress a shudder as he gazed at them. A master hand had painted them with all the cunning of the East, and the horror of the scenes was indescribable. One represented the torture of sound; the second showed a man skinned alive as far as his neck, being made to walk carrying his own skin. But the third was the most fascinating. It depicted the famous torture of pleasure; and the artist, with diabolical ingenuity, had given to the victim's face a lifelike expression

of agony and sensuality. Not only the face, but every curve of the body expressed the same emotion and quality, while in contrast, the black-robed female figure standing by seemed to be contemplating its work with an intensity of malign joy that was wonderfully vivid and startling.

Von Hartweg was still looking at this picture when a voice behind him made him start. Lotta Wendt had entered the room, and was looking at him with an ironical smile on her face.

"Admiring my pictures?" she asked.

Von Hartweg took her hand.

"My dear lady, admiring is scarcely the word. I am fascinated by them. But I must confess I cannot understand what pleasure a woman like yourself can find in covering her walls with such horrors."

"Possibly you can't," she answered shortly. "Having known me only three weeks you can't know that such subjects as these appeal to me and fascinate me beyond measure. Do you know," she went on, a curious light coming into her eyes, "that I should like to be that black-robed woman, and kill men with that very pleasure to obtain which they will ruin themselves body and soul? Then I might avenge a little of the untold misery men bring on my sex in their pursuit of pleasure."

Von Hartweg looked at her with keen interest.

"It seems that you have strange ideas for a woman of your youth and beauty, Fräulein Wendt," said he. "There is evidently something not quite normal about you."

A shadowy smile crossed Lotta's face.

"Do you know what is the only normal instinct of a woman?" she asked him. "It is the instinct of maternity. That surprises you from a woman like myself? If you look round you and see how often the mother's love for her

child far exceeds that for its father, you must confess I am right. Have you ever heard of a female beast that fought for her *mate*, even if that mate lay stricken beside her? But how often have you read of the mother, be she woman or beast, giving her last drop of life-blood to save her young? However, it is a subject which cannot interest you. Come and sit down here and tell me what is the latest news. I've not even read the papers to-day. Meanwhile we may as well have some coffee," and she crossed the room and pressed an electric bell.

Von Hartweg followed her and sat down in one of the large easy chairs. Lotta threw herself on a sofa, and leaning her head against a large yellow cushion, looked at him reflectively.

Von Hartweg drew his chair nearer.

"Do you know," he asked, "why I have come to see you this afternoon?"

She shook her head.

"Till this moment it never occurred to me to inquire the object of your visit. I hope you have not had the hardihood to come with the idea of making love to me, after all I have told you?" she laughed.

"No," he answered, "I have not come to make love to you. I came to——" he broke off, and then continued irrelevantly, "Suppose someone were to offer you all this," waving a comprehensive hand around the room, "and more, much more, and did not ask any such repayment as men ask, would you leave Stein?"

She looked at him keenly. Then she said shrewdly:

"There would be *something* to pay. Men are not such fools as to give for nothing. Tell me what the price would be?"

Von Hartweg looked away for a moment.

"Your remarks a little while ago about the strongest instincts of a woman make my proposition easier to make," said he. "Has it ever occurred to you that you are a woman made to be a mother?"

Lotta laughed scornfully.

"So that is the idea! I thought you said there were no such—obligations in your offer? Thank you; I prefer to stick to Stein."

"You are wrong," answered von Hartweg. "What I said was perfectly true. If you accept my offer you will not be asked to become any man's mistress. You will merely become a mother."

Lotta sat up from her recumbent position on the sofa and stared at him.

"My dear major!" she cried. "Has the war turned your brain? Have you become suddenly mad?"

Von Hartweg smiled.

"No," he answered quietly, "I am not mad. Listen to me for a few minutes." He leaned forward and began speaking in a low, eager voice.

As Lotta listened, expressions of horror and incredulity rapidly succeeded each other in her face, and she shrank from von Hartweg as though he were some unclean thing. As he finished speaking she rose to her feet.

"No! No!" she cried in a voice hoarse with emotion. "What you suggest is impossible!"

Von Hartweg took a cigarette from his case and lit it carefully.

"I don't want you to give me an answer at once," he said. "Take time and think it over. Do you realize that if you accept my offer, after the—er, shall we say experiment?—

you will be free to do as you like, to lead what life you please, independently of Stein and the rest of them? In fact you will be a comparatively rich woman for the rest of your life."

Lotta covered her face with her hands.

"I must think," she said almost in a whisper. "I can't give you an answer now."

Von Hartweg rose to his feet.

"Fräulein Wendt," he said, "I give you a week to think it over. If you come to a decision before, just send me word to my rooms in Frederickstrasse, that will be enough. And think carefully what it means if you accept; it means a life of affluence and comfort. On the other hand, if you refuse, it means continuing for some years like this, till your beauty fades, and then—the streets and misery."

Whilst he had been speaking, Lotta had recovered from her first impression of disgust and horror; when she spoke again it was in her usual cold, level voice.

"And suppose—I only say *suppose*—I accept, what guarantee have I that you will keep *your* part of the bargain?"

Von Hartweg smiled. He knew that the battle was already more than half won.

"Money and securities will be placed in a bank in your name on the day the experiment takes place," he answered. "Now I will not trespass on your time any longer." He held out his hand, which Lotta took mechanically. "Remember, you have a week to think it over," he impressed upon her. "Good-bye." He dropped her hand and made a stiff military bow. "We shall meet again soon, I hope."

The door closed behind him, and Lotta turned and gazed out of the window with unseeing eyes.

Three days later, when von Hartweg entered his rooms in the Frederickstrasse, his servant brought him a note on a silver salver.

"A messenger-girl brought this an hour ago, sir," the man told him. "She said it was to be given to you at once."

Von Hartweg took the letter. The writing was unknown, but there was a faint perfume about it which reminded him of Lotta. He opened it eagerly, and as he did so he smiled. There were only two words scrawled across the page:

*"I accept."*

## CHAPTER VI.

IT was two weeks after the events related in the preceding chapter that Lotta Wendt arrived at the villa that von Hartweg had taken for her in Harzburg. After many stormy scenes she had been able to get away from Stein, who had been unable to understand her capriciousness in throwing up a good engagement without any apparent reason. She would only say that she wanted a rest and was tired of Berlin. He also found it difficult to understand her firm refusal to allow him to accompany her. At first he was jealous, and accused her of an intrigue with another man; but on reflection he decided that a woman of such a frigid temperament as Lotta's would scarcely give up all the comfort and luxury he surrounded her with for a mere caprice. Men as rich as he were difficult to find in these war days, he well knew. So he came to the conclusion that it *must* be a question of nerves and health as she declared, and that it was better to let her have her way, and he could join her later.

Lotta made a pretence of agreeing with him, and gave him an address at Lausanne to write to.

Von Hartweg had procured all the necessary papers and her passport, and outwardly, to the whole of her world, Lotta Wendt took the train one morning for Basle, *en route* for Lausanne. She arrived at Munich, stayed there the night, and the next morning took a north-bound train, finally arriving at Harzburg. From that day Stein and her many Berlin friends heard no more of the beautiful Lotta Wendt. She found von Hartweg awaiting her at the villa, and with

him was an elderly grey-haired man, whom he introduced as Professor Werner, of Jena. As she entered the villa, a feeling almost of fear began to creep over her. It seemed as though the doors of a prison were closing behind her; and there was something about Werner that made her want to cry out that it was all a mistake, that they could keep their money, only let her return to Berlin—to the lights, to the life, to Stein, anything! Only let her get away from this villa, from these two men! During dinner this feeling lessened slightly. The food was good and the wine of the best, and von Hartweg kept up a light conversation on various topics; and it was only when she met the professor's grey, expressionless eyes that the feeling of terror returned.

He spoke little and ate sparingly, and it seemed to Lotta that he watched her all the time. Even when she didn't look at him she felt those expressionless eyes fixed on her. At last the dinner came to an end. Coffee and liqueurs were brought in, and the servants left the room.

The professor pushed back his chair with a sigh of satisfaction and lit a cigar. Von Hartweg did the same and offered a cigarette to Lotta. She took one, but as she tried to light it from the match von Hartweg proffered her her hand shook, and she lit it with difficulty. The professor turned towards her with an ironical smile on his pale face.

"You are evidently suffering from nerves, Fräulein Wendt," he said in his emotionless voice, "but I have no doubt that a few days of our invigorating mountain air will soon restore you. Now that we are alone, let us talk business for a few minutes. Has von Hartweg told you any of our arrangements?"

Lotta shook her head.

"I know nothing beyond that I was to come here and meet Major von Hartweg," she said.

The professor looked at her a moment as though debating something in his mind.

"My plans are these," he said at last, speaking slowly. "To-morrow you will drive over to Braunschweig with von Hartweg, where, according to the terms of our agreement, you will deposit in the Deutsche Bank money and bonds in your own name. The next day we will make the experiment—a perfectly painless operation. But as the nature of the experiment demands it, you will be given an anæsthetic. This may cause you a little inconvenience, but after the effects have worn off you will be as well as you are now."

"And then shall I be free to go away, to go where I like?"

Werner rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"I am afraid I can hardly promise you that," he answered. "You must understand that this experiment is based on an advanced theory of eugenics, and it will be necessary for you to be surrounded by a certain atmosphere and conditions of living. In fact, much as I regret it, I fear we must ask you to accept our hospitality in Harzburg for the next twelve months."

Lotta started back in consternation.

"In other words, I am to be kept here as a prisoner," she said unsteadily.

Von Hartweg broke in protestingly.

"A prisoner? Dear lady, what an idea! You will be absolutely your own mistress, free to do as you like. Our only conditions are that you remain in Harzburg for the present. I have engaged an excellent companion for you. You will find the country around delightful for excursions. There is also an automobile in the garage at your disposal, and you can make occasional trips to Braunschweig and Hanover if you wish. Our only desire is that you should

be happy whilst you are our"—he made an almost imperceptible pause before continuing—"our guest," he added, glancing at Werner.

Lotta looked from one man to the other. The feeling of the presence of some unseen terror was growing stronger every moment, and with it a sense of fatality was creeping over her. She made one more effort.

"I don't think I can go on with this," she said desperately. "It sounded all so different in Berlin. When Major von Hartweg spoke to me about it I didn't realize how utterly horrible the whole thing was. You must let me return to Berlin to-morrow. You must!"

She held out her hands appealingly to von Hartweg. The professor rose to his feet and came and stood beside her.

"My dear Fräulein Wendt, pray do not distress yourself in this manner," he said, in a tone one would use to a capricious child. "You are tired and overwrought from your journey. To-morrow morning you will feel better, then we can resume our conversation. Let me ring for your maid to conduct you to your room." He touched a bell as he spoke.

Lotta rose to her feet. She felt it would be a relief to get away from the presence of these two men. A woman entered the room.

"You will conduct this lady to her room," said the professor. Then, turning to Lotta, he took her hand and bowed over it. "Good night, Fräulein Wendt," he said, "and pleasant dreams."

To Lotta it seemed as though a corpse had touched her, and she quickly withdrew her hand from the professor's grasp. Then she turned to von Hartweg.

"I hope you clearly understand that I don't wish to proceed any further in this affair," she said in her cold, clear

voice. "To-morrow I shall leave for Berlin. Good night," and she swept out of the room.

As the door closed behind her a cynical smile crossed the professor's face. Von Hartweg turned to him impatiently.

"Damn the woman! Now what are we going to do? We shall have to go far before we find another so suitable in every way."

The professor's smile deepened.

"My dear von Hartweg, I have no intention of renewing our search," he said calmly. "Lotta Wendt is the most perfect specimen of womanhood I have ever met. Added to that, she is practically without temperament. In fact she is the Ideal Subject for the Great Experiment!"

"But," broke in von Hartweg, "she refuses to carry out the agreement. You will see, to-morrow she will return to Berlin. She meant what she said."

"To-morrow Fräulein Wendt will be here, and for many days to come," said the professor firmly.

"But how do you propose to prevent her going away if she wants to? We can't resort to force; that would be too dangerous."

The professor selected another cigar from the box on the table and lighted it. He puffed away thoughtfully for a few minutes before answering von Hartweg's last question.

"I intend preventing her leaving by a very simple plan," said he at length. "The experiment shall take place to-night. To-morrow she will still be under the influence of the anæsthetic. Afterwards," he waved his hand as though brushing away an annoyance, "we shall see. It *may* be necessary to keep her in a drugged state for a little while."

Von Hartweg leaned forward eagerly as he whispered: "Then you intend to perform the—the experiment to-night?"

The professor nodded.

"Yes, I had intended hitherto that it should take place to-morrow night, but as things are——. Everything is ready, so there need be no delay. Now I must speak to Müller, my assistant, that he makes the necessary preparations." He rang the bell, and the same woman entered who had conducted Lotta to her room. "Tell Herr Müller that I wish to speak to him," said the professor.

The woman went out, and a few minutes later Müller, a young man of about twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age, entered. The professor spoke to him in a low voice, evidently giving him instructions.

"You understand?" he said as Müller turned to leave the room. "It is now eleven o'clock; in two hours' time you will have everything ready, and you will await me upstairs."

Müller bowed and left the room.

"And now, my dear von Hartweg," the professor added, "there is nothing more to do till one o'clock. Have another cigar and make yourself comfortable. A game of cards will pass the time."

And Werner took a pack of cards from a side table. Drawing his chair up to the table he began to shuffle them.

## CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Lotta woke up the next day the afternoon sun was streaming into her room. At first she could not remember where she was. Her head felt like lead, and everything in her mind seemed dim and hazy. She did not feel even as though she wanted to move. All she wanted to do was to lie there and drift back again into sleep. The air seemed impregnated with a heavy, nauseating smell. Suddenly she realized that someone was standing beside her, and a voice was asking her if she felt better. She opened her eyes, and saw the woman who had shown her to her room the night before standing beside her, holding a cup in her hand.

"Drink this," she said, "then you will feel better."

Lotta raised herself with an effort, and the woman held the cup to her lips. She drank the contents—milk, she thought. Then she sank back again and drifted once more into oblivion. When next she awoke it was night, and a light was burning in the room. But now her brain was clear, and like a flash the knowledge of where she was and all the proceedings of the night before came back to her. And with remembrance came back the haunting fear of the place. What was she doing here? Why was she still in bed? What had happened during the night? As the last question came into her mind she sprang up in bed with a cry which brought the woman to her side.

"Does madam require anything?" she asked.

Lotta clutched her by the arm.

"Tell me," she said, "what has happened? Have I been ill? What have you given me to make me feel like this?"

The woman looked away.

"Madam was a little overwrought last night, and the Herr Professor thought necessary to administer a mild narcotic," she answered.

Lotta shook off the woman's arm.

"Bring me my clothes. I must see the professor at once," she said in a hard, unnatural voice. The idea which had come into her mind on awakening was becoming a terrible certainty. But she must *know*! She must know the truth!

The woman brought her clothes protestingly. Madam was not well enough yet. If she would wait for a few hours more, until she had quite recovered. . . .

Lotta silenced her with a look. Her head was aching terribly, and when she got up everything seemed slipping away from her. But she made a supreme effort, and succeeded in mastering the faintness that was oppressing her. She was obsessed by one idea, which gave her strength—to see the professor, to learn the truth, and then to get away from this awful house. Dressing took a long time, but at last she was ready.

"Now take me to your master," she said to the woman, who had not left the room once whilst she was dressing. The woman hesitated a moment, then, with an almost imperceptible shrug of her shoulders, led her down the stairs, across the wide hall, to a door before which was hung a heavy green curtain.

"You will find the Herr Professor in there," she said, holding aside the curtain for her to pass. Lotta turned the handle of the door without knocking, and entered the room. The professor was seated at a table, writing, but when he

saw Lotta he rose to his feet and came towards her, holding out his hand.

"I am delighted to see you looking so well, Fräulein Wendt," he said. "The rest has, I hope, done you good?"

She took no notice of his proffered hand.

"I want to know," she said slowly, "what happened last night, and why you drugged me?"

The professor smiled.

"From an intelligent woman like yourself, Fräulein Wendt," he expostulated, "such a question is surprising. You were nervous and overwrought. Therefore——"

Lotta held up her hand.

"Don't trouble to invent more lies," she said coldly. "I asked you a question, and I demand the answer."

The professor shrugged his shoulders.

"Have the truth, then, if you want it," he said impatiently. "I deemed it necessary, in the interests of"—he hesitated a moment, then went on—"of science, that The Experiment should take place last night."

## CHAPTER VIII.

LOTTA WENDT had, by reason of her varied experiences of the world, acquired the habit of accepting the inevitable with a certain degree of philosophical indifference. In fact there was a strong strain of Oriental fatalism in her character. So when the first shock of having found herself tricked by the two men had disappeared, she found herself able to consider the matter fairly calmly. She felt it was no use fighting against fate. The experiment had taken place, was an accomplished fact. If successful, at the end of nine months she would have a child. This naturally meant suffering and discomfort, but afterwards she would be free to live as she chose. Then would come the time to satisfy the longing which was so strong that it swept every other feeling aside—the longing for revenge on the two men who had tricked her. But she knew that to gain her desire she must be as subtle as they, and must trust largely to fate to place her enemies in her power. So she resumed her air of calm indifference, and appeared to accept her enforced stay in Harzburg with a fairly good grace. Von Hartweg had to return to his military duties, but the professor stayed on. In fact he was never far absent from her side. With regard to his treatment of her she had nothing to complain of; every comfort that wealth could procure was hers. She spent long hours with Werner in the mountains, and the wonderful air of the Harz seemed to act as a tonic to her, and the professor noted with inward satisfaction that her beauty seemed to become more resplendent every day. She was

now the most perfect specimen of womanhood he had ever seen. And she herself began to take a certain pleasure in her new life. Her hatred of the professor never diminished, but she found him an interesting companion. Her peculiar nature responded to many traits in his character. He had discovered the love of cruelty which was latent within her, and without appearing to do so, he encouraged and developed it to the utmost degree. She took a keen delight in watching him in his laboratory whilst he experimented on some living creature, and seemed to rejoice at the sight of the quivering limbs under the knife.

One day she asked him why they did not use criminals for the same purpose. "It would be so much more interesting," she said reflectively; and it flashed into her mind how she would like to see the professor lying there instead of that dog, to watch the agony in his eyes whilst the knife sundered the nerves and muscles. He often spoke to her about the war, enlarging particularly on the cruelty displayed by the English and French, particularly to German women in the internment camps.

He assured her that they were subject to every insult, every indignity it was possible to conceive; in fact, he strained his inventive genius to the utmost so as to inspire her with loathing for the Allies. He brought her a book entitled "The British in South Africa," in which the author's flights of imagination would have hardly deceived an intelligent child; but the book was enjoying a large sale in Germany at the moment, and the people were only too ready to believe the horrors depicted in it as a proof of the barbaric instincts of the British. Lotta listened to his stories and read the books he brought, and he saw that little by little her mind was becoming saturated with that feeling of hatred which at that moment was inspiring the whole of Germany. Then

one day he noticed an almost imperceptible change in her. What it was he could not explain, but it was there, and it puzzled him. Her face seemed to have lost its hard, insolent look, and a softer, more womanly look had taken its place. One afternoon he came upon her looking out of the window with an almost religious look on her face, and in her eyes, as she turned towards him, an expression which he could not fathom.

That evening von Hartweg arrived from Berlin, and as soon as they were alone together the professor spoke to him about the change. Von Hartweg could offer no solution, but he promised the professor to watch Lotta attentively during the next few days. At first he was as puzzled as the professor, then one afternoon enlightenment came like a blinding flash. It was the month of January, and the Harz were wrapped in their winter mantle, but the air was dry and invigorating, and Lotta, in spite of her condition, took a keen pleasure in walking every day on the hard frosty roads of the surrounding forests.

On the day in question von Hartweg had accompanied her. As they passed a forester's house a woman came out carrying a young child in her arms. Von Hartweg, who was telling Lotta one of the latest Berlin scandals, barely noticed the woman, till he became aware that Lotta was not paying any attention to what he was saying.

He turned to see what was absorbing her interest. Then in one illuminating flash he knew the truth, and understood the change that had taken place. As he looked at her he seemed to hear her saying: "The only normal instinct in a woman is the instinct of maternity." For Lotta was looking at the woman with her child as if fascinated by the sight, and on her face shone the divine light of motherhood.

Von Hartweg drew his breath sharply.

"We have failed," he muttered. "She loves her unborn child."

That evening he told the professor of his discovery. The latter listened, then rubbed his chin thoughtfully for a few minutes before answering.

"It is not altogether an unexpected development," he said at last, "and I made the mistake not to calculate on it in a woman of Lotta Wendt's temperament. But I think it a condition we may remedy. There must be some means by which I can crush this instinct before it is too late."

Von Hartweg laughed harshly as he answered:

"I acknowledge that you have a more superior intellect than most of us, my dear Werner, but I defy even you, with all your wisdom, to kill the maternal instinct in a woman once it is there!"

The professor looked at him without replying. It was evident from the expression on his face that he had scarcely listened to his companion, but was absorbed in his own reflections. Suddenly he jumped to his feet.

"I have it," he cried excitedly. "We shall yet succeed."

He turned to von Hartweg, adding:

"I guarantee that within twenty-four hours Lotta Wendt will feel such a loathing for her child that we shall have our work cut out to prevent her destroying both herself and her unborn offspring."

## CHAPTER IX.

It was late in the afternoon, and Lotta was sitting by the large wood fire in the library. She had been reading, but her book had dropped from her hands, and she was gazing into the red heart of the fire, dreaming and trying to analyse the change that had taken place in her within the last two months. It seemed unbelievable that she, who had always been known to her set as the heartless Lotta Wendt, should feel this overwhelming love for her unborn child.

*Her child!* The words thrilled her as she repeated them over to herself. As she had told von Hartweg that night in the cabaret in Berlin, she had never loved, only hated. She had never allowed any softer emotion to enter her life. She had prided herself on her strength, and had scoffed at the women who (as she termed it) were "nothing but child-bearing machines."

And now here was she, Lotta Wendt, glorying in the fact that *she* was going to become a mother. She almost blessed the professor for his experiment; all resentment seemed to have died away, drowned in the one longing—to feel her child in her arms.

She began to speculate vaguely what it would be like. She hoped, if a girl, it would have her beauty. And if a boy——? She sat upright, a look of startled fear on her face, and at that moment the professor entered the room. She turned to him impulsively.

"Herr Professor," she said, "I have never asked you

before, but I wish to know now—who is the father of my child?"

The professor drew a long breath. Fate was playing into his hands, but he must appear to dissimulate. He looked at her with an ironic smile on his lips, and answered:

"I think, Fräulein Wendt, that it is not necessary for you to know any details on this subject. You have carried out your part of the contract—we have carried out ours. I warn you it is better not to wish to learn anything further."

Lotta's eyes flashed.

"But I *insist* on knowing!" she cried. "To you, no doubt, it is only an experiment which has every chance of turning out successfully. To me it is an urgent matter. It is for my child's sake that I would know—that I *must* know."

She stamped her foot angrily. An expression of satisfaction crossed the professor's face, but Lotta was too engrossed in her own idea to notice it.

"I warn you that it may be very painful for you to know," he said slowly, "but if you insist, come with me."

He turned abruptly and led the way to his study, Lotta following him eagerly. He closed the door carefully behind her, then went to a table where a pile of illustrated papers were lying. He selected one from amongst them, and turning over the pages found what he wanted and handed it to Lotta.

"That is the father of your child," he said, pointing to a picture at the bottom of the page.

She gave one look at it, and her face seemed to turn grey. A sound that was like the moan of a dying animal came from her livid lips. She swayed, but, recovering herself with a great effort, before the professor could defend himself, she

seized a long steel paper-knife from the table and struck at him with it. He put up his arm instinctively to ward off the blow, and the blade, instead of finding his heart as she intended, glanced off and entered his shoulder. Werner staggered back under the force of the blow. Then he sprang forward and seized her by the wrists.

"You hell-cat!" he muttered through his teeth, as she struggled to free herself from his grasp. Her eyes never left his face, and in spite of himself he shuddered at their expression of loathing and hatred.

Then it seemed that suddenly her strength failed her. Her struggles ceased. She staggered, and would have fallen if the professor had not held her.

Seeing that she had fainted he laid her, unconscious, on a couch. Then he straightened himself up and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. The struggle had tried him, and the wound on his shoulder, although not serious, was beginning to hurt him. He also felt a little weak from loss of blood. But Lotta must be got out of the room before she regained her senses. He made an effort, and crossing the floor with difficulty rang the bell. A servant answered his summons.

"Have Fräulein Wendt carried to her room," he said, "and see that she receives every attention. Then find Herr Müller, and ask him to come to me at once."

Two hours later von Hartweg found him lying on the couch with his shoulder bandaged. He was paler than usual, otherwise he seemed perfectly well. To von Hartweg's questions he gave a brief outline of what had happened, touching lightly on the attempt Lotta had made on his life.

"Whose picture did you show her to produce such an effect?" asked von Hartweg curiously.

The professor smiled grimly, and reached across for the paper which was still lying on the table. Without a word he handed it to the other, pointing to the picture.

An exclamation burst from von Hartweg's lips.

"My God, Werner, what a fiend you are!" he cried, in a voice in which disgust and admiration fought for mastery.

For the picture he was looking at depicted a magnificent specimen of a gorilla belonging to the Tier-Garten in Hamburg.

## CHAPTER X.

THE spring came slowly that year; but even when at last nature finally aroused herself from her long sleep the sweet o' the year brought no promise of life and hope to the half-demented woman in the villa at Harzburg.

Who would have recognized in this pale, hollow-eyed woman the once beautiful Lotta Wendt? On her face was stamped such an indescribable look of horror that the peasants meeting her in the forest turned aside shudderingly. For hours after the events described in the last chapter she had raved, beating herself against the walls of her room, and turning like a fury upon anyone who attempted to approach her. Twice she attempted to throw herself out of the window, and it was with the greatest difficulty that her purpose was frustrated. Then she lay on the floor, refusing to eat or drink, only imploring all who came near her to let her die—die before something she dreaded should happen. At last, weak and exhausted, she sank into a heavy, lethargic sleep, and awoke from it the half-dead creature she had remained ever since.

Only one thing could arouse her, and that was if the professor came near her. Then her features would become convulsed with rage, and it would take all the strength of the two women who attended on her to keep her from him. And the professor would return to von Hartweg and rub his hands with satisfaction.

"Nothing could be better," he would say in answer to von Hartweg's inquiries; "the child will have the primitive in-

instincts of hatred and revenge predominant. I prophesy that the experiment will succeed beyond our wildest dreams! "

And then, one night when the wind was moaning like a soul possessed around the villa, and blowing the snow into clouds of silver dust across the mountain paths, the professor came hurrying into the room where von Hartweg was sitting in suspense. The major jumped to his feet as Werner entered, his face pale with excitement.

"Well?" he asked eagerly.

The professor laughed triumphantly.

"A splendid man-child has been born, strong and perfect in every limb, a lusty youngster who will live for the glory of the Fatherland! "

"And the mother? "

"The mother?" repeated the professor as he poured out two glasses of champagne. "Oh, she will not trouble us any more. She is dead."

## PART II.

1926.

The Boy.

## CHAPTER I.

THE afternoon sun was streaming into the large class-room of the gymnasium, and the boys sitting at the long line of desks gazed longingly out of the window at the blue sky, and then back again at the clock over the professor's desk, which pointed to a quarter past three. Another three-quarters of an hour. Then freedom!

The subject that afternoon was mathematics, and some of the boys, in spite of the heat, were leaning forward on their desks listening attentively to the professor, who stood at the blackboard. Others, on the contrary, were staring vacantly before them, evidently not paying the slightest attention to the subject on hand.

Two boys at the farthest end of the class-room were evidently absorbed by some object which one of them had hidden in his desk, for, when the professor turned his back to demonstrate his subject on the blackboard, they would open the desk stealthily and gaze with passionate interest at the thing that lay secreted inside.

The professor had been going through a somewhat tedious discourse on the rules for the measurement of altitudes, and was just terminating his discourse.

"Therefore, when the altitude of an object is to be taken," he was saying, "and the horizon is not bounded by the sea in consequence of intervening land, the altitude is taken from the line bounding the sea and land; and as this line is lower than the horizon, the correction for its depression will be greater than for the depression of the sea horizon, and the more so the nearer this line is to the eye of the observer."

He turned to the blackboard again, and wrote some figures with the chalk.

Then he turned and faced the boys. They had copied down his figures and were trying to work out the answer. But their brains were dull that afternoon, and it was a few minutes before any result was forthcoming. The professor grew impatient.

"Come!" he said impatiently, "have you all gone to sleep this afternoon? Oppenheim, surely *you* can give me an answer?"

The boy he addressed, an intelligent-looking young Jew, knitted his brows, and seemed to be concentrating all his mind on the answer. He made a rapid calculation, then jumped to his feet:

"I have it, sir, I think," he said brightly. "May I come to the blackboard?"

"Yes, of course," answered the professor encouragingly.

Oppenheim took the chalk and wrote down the figures the professor had given them.

"The altitude would be——" he began. But a loud crash, followed by a yell, interrupted him.

The professor turned furiously on the boys.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded. "Who made that noise?"

There was a silence, then a muffled voice sounded from the end of the room:

"Please, sir, I got my fingers pinched in von Hartweg's desk."

"He did not. I slammed the desk on his fingers on purpose," said a clear, musical voice.

The whole class turned and looked at the speaker, who was one of the two boys who had been so interested in the contents of the desk. He stood up and faced the professor with an expression of satisfaction on his handsome face.

"You again, von Hartweg!" said the professor angrily. "How many more times shall I have to punish you for bad conduct in the class? What do you mean by hurting your comrade like that? And you, Schwartz," turning to the unhappy victim who was still sucking his fingers, "what do you mean by interfering with von Hartweg's desk during the lesson? You are as much to blame as he."

Schwartz hung his head and was silent, but von Hartweg answered for him.

"I slammed the desk because he *would* look inside."

"And what have you got inside your desk that Schwartz was so anxious to see?"

It was von Hartweg's turn now to be silent, and a stubborn, rebellious look crossed his face. The professor waited a moment, then strode angrily down the room to the two boys.

"Open your desk at once, von Hartweg. We must have an end to this nonsense!"

The boy looked at him sullenly.

"If I open the desk it will get out," he said, without making a movement to obey the professor.

"What will get out?" almost shouted the other, now at the last point of exasperation. "Open that desk at once, or I will do it myself."

Von Hartweg hesitated a moment, then, seeing that the

professor would certainly carry out his threat, very reluctantly turned and opened the offending desk. As he did so there was a rush and a flutter of wings, and a large starling flew into the professor's face, nearly causing him to lose his balance and fall in his astonishment. He recovered himself, however, and turned furiously on the boy, who was gazing with regretful eyes after the bird, which had gladly soared away through the open window towards the blue sky.

"How dare you shut up a wretched bird like that in your desk?" shouted the professor. "You know as well as I do that it is forbidden for the pupils to bring any living creatures into the gymnasium, and yet you have the audacity to keep a bird like that in your desk! Apart from anything else, the cruelty of keeping anything confined in a small space, without any air, is revolting. Why, in a little while the unfortunate bird would have died of suffocation."

The boy looked eagerly into the professor's face.

"That is just what I wanted to see," he said quickly—"how long it could live without air. Only that fool (looking contemptuously at Schwartz) spoilt it all by wanting to look inside too often; and, of course, every time he opened the desk he let more air in, that is why I slammed it on his fingers."

He looked up at the professor as though he almost expected to read approval in his face, but the expression he found there was one of disgusted astonishment.

"You will be kept in for the next two half-holidays as punishment," said the professor curtly, "and you, Schwartz, will lose all your good conduct marks for the week. Now we will continue the lesson."

He returned to his desk and the lesson went on, but he found it difficult to concentrate his mind on his subject. The boy, von Hartweg, presented a much more difficult

problem than any pupil who had come his way before. It seemed incredible to believe that behind that face, almost too handsome for a boy, such a fiendishly cruel instinct lay hidden. And what was still more puzzling, the boy seemed perfectly unconscious of the fact that what he did was against all the laws of humanity. The professor remembered having caught von Hartweg in various acts of wanton cruelty. He had remonstrated with him, punished him, in fact had done everything in his power to cure the boy, but to no avail. Von Hartweg took his punishment with serene indifference, and looked vaguely astonished to hear that his actions were wrong. In short, nothing seemed to touch him.

He was not a fool, either, and when he liked to work he could easily top the class over the heads of the more thoughtful and plodding boys like Oppenheim; but he was uncertain, and only worked when he felt inclined. He seemed to regard everything with total indifference. The only thing which seemed to rouse any enthusiasm in him was when he was permitted to attend the fencing bouts held by the older students. Then he would sit, his eyes glued to the combatants, his whole face glowing with pleasure when a youth would get his face sliced open, and the whole place would be reeking with blood. Beyond that nothing seemed to interest him.

The professor sighed and looked at the clock. It was just striking four. He rose to his feet and dismissed the class. He noticed that von Hartweg hurried out before the others, and he made a step forward to call him back, but stopped as the futility of the action struck him.

He would have been further edified if he could have followed the boy into the street, for as soon as he got outside the school gates he caught hold of Schwartz, who was just beside him, and pinning his arms behind him administered

a series of vicious kicks on his shins. He soon brought his howling victim to his knees, when he flung him from him contemptuously.

"That will teach you to spoil my fun, you little ass," he said savagely. Then, without deigning to cast a further glance at his prostrate victim, he strolled off down the road whistling, followed by the admiring though rather frightened gaze of the boys grouped around Schwartz.

## CHAPTER II.

IN July the schools broke up for the summer vacation, and the boy Arnould von Hartweg went to join his father at their country house near Goslar. As the car which had driven him from the station drove up to the front door, he saw his father standing on the steps in conversation with a tall, grey-haired man whom he did not remember ever having seen before, though he knew most of his father's friends. The car stopped, and he sprang out and ran up the steps. There was no demonstration of affection in the greeting which passed between father and son. They merely shook hands; then the elder von Hartweg turned to the man at his side.

"This is Arnould," he said simply, with his hand on the boy's shoulder. "You see, he will soon be quite a man. Arnould, this is a very old friend of mine, Professor Werner. He knew you when you were a very little boy."

Arnould held out his hand and looked up at the professor with frank interest on his handsome face.

"I don't remember *you* at all," he said after a moment's pause. "I suppose it must have been when I was quite a baby?"

The professor, who had been looking at the boy scrutinisingly, smiled grimly.

"Yes, you were quite a baby when I last saw you; but you promised even then to grow into a fine lad."

Arnould shifted uncomfortably. There was something in the way Werner looked at him which made him feel vaguely hostile towards him. He could not have explained why if he had been asked to do so; only he knew that, for

some unknown reason, he was going to hate this man as he had never hated anything or anybody in his life before. It was the first time that he had ever felt any strong emotion, and it made him feel ill at ease before the two men. Von Hartweg noticed the boy's discomfiture, and turned to a man-servant who was standing behind him.

"Take Master Arnould's luggage up to his room," he said. "And you, Arnould, go and tidy yourself after your journey and join us again in the smoking-room."

The two men watched the boy as he walked up the steps, followed by the servant, then they looked at each other for a moment without speaking. At last von Hartweg broke the silence.

"Well, what do you think of him?" he asked. "Are you satisfied?"

"I can't say till I see more of his character," answered Werner thoughtfully. "Physically the boy is perfect, but I must see how the psychological side of him is forming."

"Up to the present it is all that we could desire," said von Hartweg quickly. "The boy is absolutely without feeling of any kind, and is totally indifferent to everything around him. I am constantly receiving complaints from his masters of his callous cruelty and want of humanity towards his fellow students and all beasts. In the last report they complain that, although intelligent, he appears to be lacking in concentration, and has no moral sense of right or wrong. On the other hand, he has, for a boy of his age, a will of iron, and is absolutely fearless. In fact, up to now he is a success."

"Yes," said Werner, after a few moments' reflection, "up to the present he is all that we could desire; but we must remember he is still a child. The second decade, the most important of his development, is yet to come."

Von Hartweg took him by the arm.

"Let us continue our conversation in the smoking-room," he said. "There is much I want to ask you, and here we may be overheard."

The next morning, at breakfast, von Hartweg announced his intention of riding over to visit some people by the name of Siebert, who had taken a villa in the vicinity, and he invited Werner and Arnauld to accompany him. The former refused, saying he had some letters to write. So half-an-hour later the horses were brought round, and von Hartweg and Arnauld started out alone. As von Hartweg had told Werner the day before, Arnauld was a boy who did not know the meaning of fear, and he rode with a reckless grace which made passers-by look after him with admiration. He was mounted on a horse which many would have deemed a much too powerful beast for a boy of his age, but he managed it with perfect ease, and with a skill of which many an older horseman would have been proud.

For some time they rode on in silence; then Arnauld said abruptly:

"I am glad Professor Werner did not come with us. It would have spoilt the ride."

Von Hartweg looked at him in mild surprise.

"Why have you taken a dislike to the professor? He is one of my oldest friends, and perhaps the greatest scientist in the whole of Germany," he asked.

Arnauld looked away across the undulating panorama stretched out before them.

"I can't explain why," he said sullenly, "but I hate him. It is stupid, I know. He seems to be watching me all the time."

Von Hartweg did not answer. He felt vaguely startled. Was the spirit of the dead mother becoming manifest in

the son? And if so, what further developments would take place as he grew older? He glanced at the boy, riding by his side; Lotta Wendt had left her son the heritage of her beauty. Arnould was the image of his dead mother. In fact, at times the likeness was so striking that von Hartweg could almost believe Lotta was before him. The boy had been brought up to believe von Hartweg was his father, and he had been told that his mother had died at his birth. It had evidently never occurred to him to question the truth of the story.

Von Hartweg's reflections were interrupted by their arrival at the Siebert villa, and Herr Siebert came hurrying out to welcome them. He shook hands warmly with them both, and looked at Arnould admiringly.

"What a handsome youngster the boy is growing! We will soon have him breaking all the ladies' hearts with that face," he said, winking at von Hartweg.

The latter frowned. This was a subject which, even in jest, he did not wish discussed before the boy. He was about to make some remark which would turn the conversation into a different channel, when a diversion was created by the appearance of a little girl of about ten years old at the door.

"Ah, here is Elsa," said Siebert, holding out his hand to the child, who ran towards him. Then, on seeing the stranger, she hung back shyly.

"Come here, my treasure," said her father. "Here is Arnould von Hartweg, who has come to see you."

The little girl came forward and held out her hand to the boy. To her he seemed a very wonderful person, standing there holding that big horse so confidently, not at all the sort of person who would come and play hide-and-seek in

the forest with her. Siebert called a groom to come and hold the horses, then he took von Hartweg affectionately by the arm.

"Come," he said, "we two old ones will go in and have a glass of beer and a pipe, and the two youngsters can run about and amuse themselves."

After their elders had disappeared into the house, the two children looked at each other for a few moments without uttering a word; then Elsa, like a true daughter of Eve, made the first advance.

"There are some lovely strawberries in the garden," she said insinuatingly.

Arnauld looked down at her with a sulky expression on his handsome face. He felt angry with his father and Herr Siebert that they had left him alone with this little girl. He did not like little girls. In fact, he had never had anything to do with them. They seemed strange, incomprehensible creatures who couldn't do anything; and now here he was alone with this flaxen-haired girl, who was evidently bent on being friendly. But now she was speaking of strawberries; that was better.

"Where are they?" he asked suspiciously.

Elsa clapped her hands joyfully.

"Come along, I'll show you!" she cried, catching hold of his sleeve; and Arnauld, with a bad enough grace, allowed himself to be dragged to the garden at the back of the house, where sure enough was a large bed of magnificent strawberries. It is difficult, even with the best intentions in the world, to remain dignified when you are squatting on your marrow-bones beside somebody, and stuffing fruit into your mouth as quickly as you can, and Arnauld soon found himself forgetting all about his aversion to little girls, and chattering away to Elsa as he might have done to another boy.

From the strawberry bed they wandered into the orchard, and Elsa cast longing glances at the ripe red cherries hanging on the branches.

"I'd love to have some, wouldn't you?" she said.

Arnauld laughed, and clambered into a tree. A moment later Elsa was holding up her pinafore to catch the shower of fruit which came hurtling through the branches. Her delighted laughter rang through the summer air, and Arnauld for the first time in his short life felt the pleasure which is derived from being able, even if only in a small way, to give a moment's pleasure to another fellow-being. The sensation came as rather a pleasant shock to him, for he was by nature the incarnation of egoism; and to find that it was possible to feel happiness in something which was centred in another person was a not altogether unpleasant surprise.

When he slipped down to the ground again he was greeted enthusiastically by the young lady, whose first feeling of awe had changed into worshipping admiration for this delightful companion, who could climb trees with the agility of a monkey and procure her all the forbidden fruit her heart desired, and (what was still better) not take the largest share for himself, like her cousin Erik always did. Erik was a selfish pig, she thought; he always wanted the best of everything, whilst Arnauld had left her all the largest cherries, and only ate a few himself. At this point of reflection her admiration knew no bounds, and she caught hold of Arnauld's arm and squeezed it affectionately.

At this moment Herr Siebert's voice was heard calling them, and with a guilty glance at her companion, Elsa threw the remaining cherries over the hedge and raced off in the direction of the house, closely followed by Arnauld, who felt rather sorry to think this morning was over.

"Come again soon," called Herr Siebert after them as

they rode away. "If you can't come, von Hartweg, send Arnould over. He will always be welcome."

As they reached the corner of the drive, Arnould turned in his saddle and waved his hand to the little white figure standing on the steps.

Although he did not know it, that morning had awakened something in him which would influence his future life. For the first time *Ego* had been in abeyance, and something, which Professor Werner would probably have put down as awakened activity of the ganglionic cell, but which others, less learned, would term soul, had begun to stir within him.

Werner thought he had killed the soul of the mother and child; but the few months of love that Lotta Wendt had given her unborn child would not be denied, and some day they would bear their fruit.

## CHAPTER III.

A FEW days later, as Arnould was going down to dinner, he heard the humming of an aeroplane, evidently flying very low; and then he saw von Hartweg and Werner hurry out and respectfully bow before two officers who were alighting from a large private machine which was lying like a huge bird on the lawn in front of the house. Arnould wondered who the strangers could be, and why his father and Werner were making so many demonstrations of politeness.

His curiosity was soon satisfied, for when he entered the dining-room the four men were standing together at the end of the room. They all turned and looked at him as he entered. Then von Hartweg came forward and put his hand on Arnould's shoulder and led him up to the taller of the two officers.

"This is the boy, your Highness," said von Hartweg, still keeping his hand on Arnould's shoulder. The small, cunning eyes scrutinised him keenly, and it suddenly struck the lad that the four men were all looking at him and considering him more like the farmers look at the cattle they have come to buy at a market than one human being looks at another. He knew now what had made him feel such repugnance for Werner; the same look had been in his face when he had seen him the first time.

"A wonderful success, my dear Werner," said the man whom von Hartweg had addressed as Highness, without taking any notice of the boy. "If they are all like this one,

you may well feel proud. If we had only done this years ago, we might have had these supermen with us in '18, and prevented the Revolution!"

Werner bowed.

"If your Highness would care to visit my various institutions you will be able to judge for yourself," he said. "Naturally, we cannot expect perfection in every case, but on the whole we have no reason to complain."

"How old is this boy?" asked the Prince abruptly, turning again to look at Arnauld.

"Twelve years of age," answered von Hartweg. "As your Highness can see, he is taller than most boys of his age."

"Almost old enough to enter the cadet school at Potsdam," said the Prince reflectively. "In fact, I think the sooner they all begin their military education the better. If we send them now, at sixteen or seventeen they will be as well trained as many of our older men, and ready when the moment comes. But I wish to speak of this more fully later. I propose now, gentlemen, that we dine."

And the Prince led the way to the table. Arnauld sat down feeling rather bewildered, and at the same time more excited than he had ever felt before.

He was going to be sent to a military school. That was clear, and he felt a thrill of joy at the prospect. But who were these others whom the Prince and Werner kept alluding to, and how was it that his father appeared to have no say in the arrangements for his future? He was glad when at last dinner was over, and von Hartweg told him he could leave the room. He wanted to be alone and ponder over these puzzling questions for himself.

As soon as the boy had left the room, the four men, as if by common consent, drew their chairs more closely together, and the Prince began to speak in a low, rapid voice.

"I have come here to-night, gentlemen, as you know, to see that boy who has just left the room, and to discuss our future plans for the utilisation of these creatures, which are the result of our friend Professor Werner's experiments twelve years ago. If they are all such perfect young animals as that boy, they will make splendid soldiers for the Fatherland, but we must make them commence their military education at once. In doing this, though, we must not forget the moral side of the question; they must have *but one God, their Emperor; but one creed, to serve their country; but one desire, revenge on our enemies!*"

Werner smiled grimly.

"I think your Highness would be more than satisfied if you visited the institutions in various parts of the country where these boys are kept and educated. As your Highness is aware," he continued, "we have left the question of 'kultur' very much in abeyance; but, on the other hand, all our energies are directed towards their *physical* development and the knowledge and use of arms. To inculcate a deep and lasting hatred of our enemies in them from the very first, Dr. Schlaeger, the Principal of our largest institution in Leipzig, has inaugurated the rule that any boy committing a minor offence shall be forced for three days to go about with a card pinned to his back, with the words '*I am a Frenchman*' written on it, and his companions are forbidden to speak to him. For a more grave offence, he is made to wear a similar card for a week, only the words are changed to '*I am an Englishman*,' and for two hours every day he has to stand in the corner of the class-room, with a dunce's cap on his head, and the English flag in his hand. No one speaks to him, and at meal times he has to eat at a table set apart from the others. So it is not difficult to

imagine that, from their earliest childhood, the names of England and France are held in execration."

The Professor stopped speaking, and his three companions nodded approvingly.

"Excellent, excellent!" said the Prince. "The army which we will put into the field ten years hence will paralyse the world; and our enemies who imagine that after the Revolution and Peace of 1919 our military power is crushed for at least a century, if not for ever, they will soon find out their mistake. The army they will have to reckon with in ten years' time will be twice as powerful as the army we defied the world with in 1914. Experience has taught us much, and I can guarantee there will be no mistake next time. We are steadily increasing our aerial forces every year, and the invasion of our deadliest enemy will be possible by means of the new invention. I refer to the super-submarine-hydroplane, the plans of which you, von Hartweg, have already seen. There are also other means, but these will be explained to you later. The point at present is to concentrate all our attention on these experiments of Werner, so that we can get every ounce of use that is to be got out of them for the benefit of the Fatherland and the re-establishment of the Monarchy."

Up to now, the officer who had accompanied the Prince had hardly taken any part in the conversation, except to nod his approval at anything that was put forward. Now, however, he bent forward and addressed the Prince:

"Will your Highness permit me to make a remark?" he asked. The Prince made a gesture for him to continue.

"Your Highness must forgive my touching on a delicate subject, but I feel compelled to ask what political education these boys are to receive? The German soldiers now

belong to our party, but the masses, the people who count, belong, I regret to say, heart and soul to the Republic."

There was a dead silence for a few moments, then the Prince answered in an irritable voice:

"Your question strikes me as being absurd, Major Breitkopft. You have apparently forgotten an important factor in the case—that these boys are nothing but soulless creatures which we have created to serve the Fatherland. There can be no question of a political education with such beings."

Breitkopft bowed his head respectfully.

"I do not deny that your Highness's remarks are not perfectly correct, and that, as long as these boys remain in the various institutions, they will not trouble about political questions. But," he said earnestly, "the moment we draft them into the army they will be expected to have opinions of their own. Some of them, naturally, will be nothing but machines; but others, like Arnould, however soulless they may be, will want to think and act for themselves. Since the Revolution which displaced your august father, even the soldier has dared to think for himself. And that is what we have to face."

Here von Hartweg interposed.

"With regard to Arnould," he said, speaking quickly, "there need be no discussion. All his political leaning will be in favour of your Highness, and, as his education and intelligence are far superior to that of the institute boys, it is possible that, as a man, he will have considerable influence over them."

A look of great cunning crossed the Prince's face.

"A man with influence might do much," he said reflectively. "The Socialists are becoming more powerful every

year, but if the army were once ours, we could crush any movement they may try to make. You were right, after all, Breikopft—the greatest attention must be given to their political education; and I now charge you with the task of seeing it carried through. As for Arnould, I shall see that, after he has passed through the military college, he is attached to my suite."

## CHAPTER IV.

THE Prince left the next morning, and, beyond the fact that von Hartweg told Arnauld that in the Autumn he was to be sent to Potsdam, no allusion was made to the royal visit. Life at the villa resumed its usual monotonous calm. Arnauld was out all day, riding, shooting or fishing, and very often, on the latter expeditions, little Elsa Siebert would accompany him; and the two children would pass long days in the mountains, sitting by the bubbling streams and catching baskets of silvery trout, who readily took the fly which Arnauld cast over them.

On these occasions, they were always accompanied by Elsa's favourite dachshund, "Toby," who adored his young mistress, but appeared to regard Arnauld with a suspicious distrust that did not at all trouble the boy, who had naturally an aversion to all animals. It rather amused him than otherwise to see Toby show all his teeth and growl if he tried to touch him. But one day, things came to a climax, and it spelt tragedy for Toby.

They had been fishing all the morning, and, the sun being warm, Elsa had put down her rod, and, having found a comfortable spot quite near, was soon fast asleep, with Toby, as usual, curled up close to her. A little while later, Arnauld wanted to change his fly, and looking round for his book, saw it lying on the grass beside Elsa. He did not wish to awaken her, so he leaned over to take the book without disturbing the sleeping child; but he had reckoned without Toby. Whether the dog thought he was trying to steal something belonging to his mistress, or if some other equally

sinister idea went through his canine brain, one can never know, but, as Arnauld's hand closed over the book, the dog sprang at him. There was a struggle, and then a loud splash, which awoke Elsa. She sprang to her feet with a cry of consternation as she saw her unfortunate pet making a futile struggle for life in the rushing stream, which, in spite of all his efforts, was sweeping his little body away towards the rushing water-fall about a hundred yards below them. Elsa clasped her hands together in an agony of grief.

"Toby, Toby!" she wailed. "Oh, Arnauld, save him! Do something; don't let him be drowned!"

She turned appealingly to the boy, expecting him to respond at once to her prayer; but the words froze on her lips as she caught sight of his face, for he was laughing—yes, laughing, with satisfaction written all over his face, as he watched Toby's feeble struggles for life.

"Arnauld," she gasped, "don't you see Toby's being drowned? Why don't you try to save him? Oh, you beast!" she cried furiously. "How *can* you stand there laughing?"

For answer, Arnauld held out his hand, which showed several discoloured marks like bruises, but the skin had not been broken.

"Look," he said; "the little brute bit me, and I threw him in. It is not likely I am going to fish him out now."

Elsa's eyes grew round with horror.

"You threw him in?" she gasped. "You *threw* . . ." Words seemed to fail her, and, silently, she turned and ran swiftly towards a bend in the stream, past which in a second or two Toby's body would be swept. Arnauld raced after her, shouting to her to stop. He knew, only too well, the danger if once she got caught in the rushing water; but Elsa paid no heed to his cries, and, reaching the bend, she

waded in and clutched at Toby as he was swirled past. But fate was against her, and as she reached forward to catch the dog, her foot slipped and she would have shared Toby's fate, had not Arnauld's hand grasped her arm and pulled her on the bank out of danger.

"Let me go!" she sobbed, fighting him like a young wild cat in her struggles to get away. "Let me go! You beast! You beast! Oh, how I hate you! Let me go!"

But Arnauld's grasp did not relax.

"You little fool," he said roughly. "You will be killed if you fall in the water."

Elsa turned on him, her eyes blazing with hatred.

"Yes, like Toby will be! Oh, I wish he had bitten your hand off, but I'll do it for him."

And without another word of warning, she buried her teeth in the hand that held her. Arnauld gave a yell, and with a wrench and a twist the little fury got away from him, and rushed again to the bank. It was too late. Poor Toby had disappeared, never to be seen again. When Elsa realised that, she turned slowly, and walked up to Arnauld, who was trying to stanch the blood which was flowing from his wounded hand.

"Arnauld von Hartweg," she said, between her teeth, "you have murdered my dog, and I shall hate you as long as I live!"

Then she burst into tears, and rushed towards home, crying, between her sobs:

"He has murdered Toby. Oh, I hate him! I hate him!"

And Arnauld remained there, looking at his bleeding hand, and wondering why so much fuss was made about the drowning of a snapping dog.

## CHAPTER V.

It can easily be imagined that, after the events recorded in the last chapter, Arnauld did not again visit the Sieberts.

For a few days, his hand was very painful, and it took some time to heal.

Elsa's teeth were sharp, and he would carry the scars all his life. He had given his father a brief account of what had occurred, and was pleasantly surprised not to receive the reproof or punishment he had anticipated. In fact, in rather a vague way, von Hartweg seemed to approve of his action; and so the days passed by, and the holidays ended, and Arnauld went to Potsdam and began his new life as a military cadet.

At first he hated the discipline which surrounded him, and, in the first few months of his cadetship, he was constantly being punished for not conforming to the rules of the college. But, little by little, the iron hand of Prussian Militarism, which even the European War had not been able to crush, prevailed; and Arnauld, at the end of his first year at Potsdam, had begun to acquire all the rigid automatic spirit which dominates the German army.

From the first, he was taught that as a soldier he must only recognise one master; that, in everything, his will must be subservient to what was decreed by that one all-dominating power, the Emperor!

It cannot be said that Arnauld was any more popular at Potsdam than he had been at the Gymnaseum. There was always something about him which repelled his comrades. Perhaps it was his cynical indifference to all his surround-

ings, which seemed strange in a youth of his age, and that awakened their distrust.

One thing is certain, he was more disliked than otherwise; and yet, in many things, the other boys acknowledged him as their leader, and he accepted the rôle quite naturally, almost as though it were his by right. It would have been remarkable, surrounded as he was by boys saturated in patriotism, to whom Kaiser and Fatherland were a religion, had he not caught something of the enthusiasm which he met at every corner; and it is certain that he gradually became influenced by the atmosphere in which he lived. Of more interest to him were the wonderful machines of destruction which his country was inventing to destroy her enemies in the next war.

His passionate interest in all engines of destruction marked him out for a special course at the College, and his quick mind, young though he was, quickly grasped the importance of the various inventions to which German science had given birth during the past ten years.

The aircraft filled him with particular enthusiasm. Here were engines with never-ending possibilities. As all kinds of aircraft were now in as common use as the motor-car was in 1914, it was easy for him to learn to fly, and after his second year as a cadet he was given his pilot's certificate. He quickly became known as the most brilliant and daring flyer in the cadet corps. His greatest ambition was to make a flight to England. He was curious to see this country which inspired his countrymen with such undying hatred, and for the destruction of which all inventive Germany was concentrating her power.

He longed for the time when he would be able to accompany one of the fighting squadrons, and see the effect of some of those terrible bombs which were supposed to be

able to reduce to ruins whole towns. But when he asked impatiently when he could go on such an errand, he was told that the time had not yet come, and that he must not try to rush things—that way failure had lain before. And so the time passed on, and Arnould had to be satisfied with making short-distance flights to places in Germany.

On one of these occasions, an incident happened which made a profound impression on his mind. His father had arrived unexpectedly one day, just as he was getting ready for a flight, and, as von Hartweg said he had business that evening in Leipzig, Arnould asked permission to pilot him there in his plane. The permission was granted, and they set off. Leipzig was in sight when Arnould became aware that there was something wrong with one of his engines. He told his father it would be better for them to land at once, as they were on the outskirts of the town, and it would be easier. Von Hartweg agreed, and they came gently down in a large meadow adjoining a building which had the appearance of a large college or institution.

As Arnould and his father alighted, a number of boys ran out of the gates, and they were soon surrounded by an eager group asking what had happened.

Arnould looked at them, and saw they were all boys of about his own age, of magnificent physique; in fact it would have been difficult to find a finer collection of young animals than the group of boys who were crowding around the two von Hartwegs; but what would have struck an onlooker at once, after the first feeling of admiration had passed, was the almost expressionless stupidity depicted on each face, an expression which in some cases would change to a look of extreme cunning as the mood varied.

As von Hartweg and Arnould walked slowly towards the house, always accompanied by an ever-increasing crowd of

boys, an officer came hurrying towards them. As he drew near, his face lit up with recognition, and he came forward with outstretched hands.

"My dear von Hartweg, what lucky accident has given me the pleasure of this visit?"

Von Hartweg shook the proffered hand warmly.

"A happy accident indeed that has given me the pleasure of meeting my old comrade! Why, it must be at least ten years since we met? Arnauld, have you forgotten Colonel Breitkopft who once visited us in Goslar?"

Arnauld saluted in true Prussian fashion, bowing stiffly.

"Oh, yes, I remember Colonel Breitkopft perfectly," he answered. "He accompanied his Royal Highness when he honoured us with a visit."

Breitkopft gave him a hearty slap on the back and laughed.

"I see they are turning out a smart young officer at Potsdam, and I may tell you that very favourable reports have come to headquarters about you; but now that this intelligent machine has landed you both here, I must insist on your lunching with me. As luck will have it, I am here on a tour of inspection and . . ."

"Then this is one of Werner's institutions?" interrupted von Hartweg, looking round curiously at the boys who were following at a respectful distance behind them.

"Yes," answered Breitkopft, casting a quick glance at Arnauld. "I come and inspect them every six months, and I must say they are turning out splendidly. Every boy is already a trained soldier, and could be placed on the field to-morrow, if need be. If you look over there, you can see some of them at bayonet drill."

He pointed as he spoke to a dozen boys who were attacking with almost ferocious precision a line of dummies dressed

up in what was meant to represent English and French uniforms. Von Hartweg looked at the boys with interest.

"I see they are never allowed to forget who their enemies are," he said, laughing. "Are you such adepts at Potsdam, Arnould?"

"At Potsdam they teach us to use the sword," answered the boy. "But I know how to use a bayonet, too, if necessary. Colonel von Adler, our flying master, prefers us to be more practised in aerial tactics than in hand-to-hand fighting like this. We are always having sham fights in the air."

Von Hartweg and Breitkopf walked on towards the house, but Arnould lingered behind. A wild desire had seized him to go and prod at those imaginary English and French soldiers, and to cheat himself for a few minutes with the idea that the steel bayonet was entering real flesh-and-blood and that he was killing off a few of those hated English.

With this idea in his head, he walked over to the group of boys who were taking a few minutes' rest from their exertions, and addressed himself to a young Hercules about his own age, who appeared to be the leader:

"I should like to practise, too, if you will lend me a bayonet," he said politely.

The other looked at his fair, effeminate face, and burst out laughing.

"Look at the pretty boy who wants us to lend him our bayonet so that he can practise, too!" He mimicked Arnould's voice to perfection. "You had better run away and play with your dolls. These are men's games. You wouldn't be able to hold a bayonet in those white hands of yours."

And the speaker, sticking his fingers into the arms of his waistcoat, swaggered around Arnould with an insolent grin on his face.

The next moment he was sprawling his full length on the grass, and Arnould was standing over him, his face blazing with fury. It was the first time that such an ungovernable fit of rage had seized him, and for the moment he felt only the desire to kill.

His whole face was distorted, and he looked like some wild beast standing over his prey. His eyes had lost all expression of sanity. The whites were congested with blood, while his lips, drawn back over his teeth, gave a wolfish aspect to his features.

The other boys drew away from him in an affrighted group, and his victim gazed up at him in terrified surprise, expecting every minute that Arnould would pick up one of the bayonets and stick it into him. But, as suddenly as the fit of insane fury had come, so it passed away, and the boy on the ground saw the mad look die out of his eyes. The lips relaxed, and Arnould passed his hand across his eyes as though awakening from a dream; then he looked down and saw the boy at his feet, and seemed to remember.

"Get up!" he said, giving him an encouraging kick in the ribs. "Do you want to lie there all day?" Then he turned away, and walked towards the house. He felt dazed and rather frightened at what had happened, for he knew that at the moment when that fit of fury had seized him, something had seemed to snap in his head, and he had only wanted to kill.

It was providence that had placed the bayonet out of his reach at the moment, otherwise that boy's blood would assuredly have been on his hands.

When he rejoined his father and Breitkopf, they both

remarked that he looked pale, but he turned off their attention by saying that he had a slight headache, and at once reminding his father that it was time they went into Leipzig so that he could return to Potsdam before night.

So they took leave of Breilkopft, but the incident remained for a long time in Arnould's mind, for he knew that he could never be sure of himself again; there was some force hidden within him that might dominate him in the future. But things went on as usual upon his return to Potsdam. Arnould felt no recurrence of the feeling of mad, red rage, and, gradually, the first impression died out of his mind, and he thought no more about it.

## CHAPTER VI.

It was when Arnauld was seventeen years of age, and in the last year of his studies at Potsdam, during the summer vacation, that he again met Elsa Siebert. He was walking through the forest one afternoon, a gun slung over his shoulder in case a stray rabbit should cross his path, when he found that the road was leading him to the Sieberts' villa.

He had never called there since the episode of Toby, but he had not been able to forget Elsa; to the day of his death he would carry the white marks on his hand made by her teeth.

His father had spoken of them from time to time, and he vaguely remembered hearing that Elsa had been sent to a *Pensionnat* in Lucerne to finish her education.

Now as the villa came in sight he fell to wondering if Elsa was at home, and, if so, would she remember him? He looked ruefully at his hand and laughed. If she did, it would scarcely be in a friendly fashion. As he approached the gate he hesitated, and looked through the iron railings into the garden, and it was then he became aware that somebody was behind him, and he turned and saw Elsa. He recognised her at once, although the pretty child had grown into a beautiful young girl of sixteen. There was still something of the sweet childish expression remaining. Arnauld at once stepped forward and raised his cap:

"Fräulein Elsa, have you forgotten me altogether, or may I hope to have still some place in your thoughts?"

Elsa flushed, and looked hesitatingly at the handsome boy standing before her.

"I am afraid I——" she began timidly. Then her expression changed, and a look of recognition came into her blue eyes. "Why, you are Arnould von Hartweg! How you have changed! I should never have known you."

She held out her hand, and Arnould believed with inward satisfaction that the unfortunate episode of Toby had quite died out of her mind. But in this he was wrong, as her next remark showed.

"Oh, look at your poor hand," she said, looking down at the hand which still grasped hers. "The marks of my teeth have remained all this time! I am sorry. What a little fury I must have been! But," with a quick change of mood, "you were cruel, and even now, when I think of how you let my poor Toby drown, I hate you!"

Arnould held out his hand beseechingly:

"Fräulein Elsa, don't be too hard on the stupidity and wickedness of a child of twelve! If you knew how often I have regretted that never-to-be-forgotten incident, I am sure you would forgive me."

Elsa looked at him severely for a moment or two; then a smile flickered over her lips.

"If you are truly sorry, I suppose we *must* make peace! And, after all, you were well punished for your abominable conduct, because you'll never lose those marks."

Arnould bowed gallantly.

"I never want to, for they remind me of you," he said.

Elsa laughed:

"Is that the kind of speech you learn at Potsdam? I do hope you will not become as stupid as all the other officers I meet. You used to be such a serious boy, but now . . ." she broke off, suddenly, as a tall young man, in the undress

uniform of a sub-lieutenant of the Uhlans, came out of the house and walked down the path towards them. Elsa greeted him cordially, then, turning to Arnould, said:

"This is my cousin, Lieutenant Hans von Messing. Hans, this is an old friend of mine, Arnould von Hartweg."

The two boys (for von Messing was only nineteen) shook hands rather stiffly, and von Messing eyed Arnould in a none-too-friendly fashion. It was clear that he did not at all approve of this old friend of his cousin, with his handsome if somewhat effeminate face and graceful figure. He himself was a good-looking boy, but in a heavy Prussian fashion, and there was something about Arnould that awakened his distrust. However, he hid whatever anti-feeling he had, and began speaking to Arnould about Potsdam and some mutual friends of theirs who had just terminated their course at the College. Both young officers, in true Teutonic fashion, quite ignored Elsa, and only spoke of things which interested themselves. This the girl did not resent, for it must be remembered Elsa was born a German, and such a want of courtesy passed quite unnoticed. Soon afterwards, they were joined by Herr Siebert, who welcomed Arnould with great cordiality.. After a few minutes' conversation, Arnould declined an invitation to enter the house and take coffee, saying he had promised his father to be back early. But, when he took Elsa's hand to say farewell, he began to wish he had accepted the invitation, and all the way home he was haunted by a picture of Elsa's golden hair and blue eyes. And into the picture would come the heavy Prussian face of Hans von Messing gazing down at her with a look of adoration.

The next day, Arnould found his steps again leading him towards the Sieberts' villa. If any one had asked him,

he would have been quite unable to analyse the feeling with which Elsa inspired him. He did not understand it himself; he only knew that he felt a distinct pleasure in being near her, and that he loved to feast his eyes on her graceful figure and blonde girlish beauty.

The idea of Hans von Messing being constantly with Elsa gave him a feeling of intense irritation. In fact, perhaps it was chiefly due to the knowledge that Hans was always with his cousin that Arnould wished so eagerly to be with her himself. Manlike, he coveted what another man found fair and desirable. Although Elsa attracted him greatly, he was not at all in love; but he had seen that Hans openly adored his cousin, and he was determined that he should not have it all his own way.

It was with these feelings that Arnould found himself again in the Sieberts' garden with Elsa and her cousin. They had been playing tennis, and Elsa asked Arnould to join them. It was not a game he had any particular love for, but he played it, as he did everything else, well. He knew he could easily beat Hans, whose heavy figure prevented him from being able to exercise the agility necessary to the game; he accepted. He played the other two, beating them every time till they called quarter, and then they retired to the shade of the trees, and the servants brought iced coffee to refresh them.

Arnould noticed, with inward satisfaction, that Elsa bestowed a great deal more attention on him than on Hans, who could scarcely hide his annoyance. And when he took his leave some time later, Elsa looked at him with a most bewitching smile, and invited him to come the next day, which he did, and the next and the next, until it became the custom for Arnould to walk over every day on some excuse or other.

And every day Elsa grew kinder, and Hans more surly, and Arnould felt extremely pleased with himself about the whole affair.

And then one day the inevitable happened. Arnould had arrived at the house, and was told that Elsa had gone into the forest. As the servant told him she had only left a few minutes before, he started off in pursuit; he had not gone far when he heard voices, and, turning a corner, came upon Elsa and her cousin. Elsa's face was slightly flushed, but her eyes were sparkling with merriment. Hans looked sullen and bad-tempered, and, as Arnould came up, he appeared to be reproaching Elsa for something she had said or done. When he saw the other boy, he stopped abruptly in the middle of a sentence and glared at him. He looked so funny that Arnould burst out laughing.

"Have you two been quarrelling?" he asked.

Elsa's eyes danced.

"On the contrary," she laughed. "Hans has just honoured me by asking me to be his wife, and now he is angry, because I told him that he must grow up to be a man before I can consider such a proposal."

Hans's heavy face grew scarlet.

"If you can find nothing better to do than laugh at me, I'll leave you to enjoy yourself. I'm afraid I have not the same sense of humour. But remember," he added, glaring at her, "that you *will* be my wife some day, however amusing the idea may seem to you now!"

And, bowing stiffly, he stalked away in dignified wrath.

Elsa looked after him, smiling.

"Poor Hans," she said, "he is so angry with me! But he *was* funny! I couldn't help laughing."

Arnould did not speak. He was again in the grip of

inexplicable feelings. As, on two former occasions in his life, a wave of blind insane fury had seized him, so now a wild rage was consuming him at the idea that Hans wished Elsa to be his wife.

Although only a boy in years, he had a man's mind, a man's powers. And Potsdam was not a school in which innocence flourished. He looked at Elsa in her soft white dress. The sunlight filtering through the trees of the forest shone on her golden hair and seemed to form a halo of light round her head, enhancing the sweet girlish purity of her. But Arnould saw nothing of this; what he saw was Elsa in her cousin's arms, Elsa's lips lifted to receive his kisses, his huge fleshy hands playing with her hair, Elsa giving herself up to all a lover's caresses. The picture grew still more vivid in his mind, and the madness mounted to his brain.

This was no ordinary fit of jealousy, which would have been a natural outcome of events had he loved Elsa. But there was no love; the sentiment that was dominating Arnould now was the same as inspires any male animal to fight and try and destroy any other male that comes anywhere within sight, if a female is standing by.

Werner, if he could have seen him at that moment, would have understood and chuckled at his handiwork.

Arnould became alive to one idea, and only one. *He* would be the first to teach Elsa the meaning of the word love. Afterwards, Hans, or any one else, could have her! But first . . .

"Arnould, what are you thinking of? I've spoken to you three times, and you haven't answered me."

And Elsa turned and looked at him reproachfully. Then her look changed to alarm, as she caught sight of his set white face.

"Arnauld, what is the matter? Are you ill?"

She caught hold of his arm anxiously, and looked up into his face. Her soft touch had the effect of casting aside every barrier of self-control which he may have been trying to exercise, and, with a half-smothered cry, he caught her roughly in his arms, pressing brutal kisses on her face and neck.

"Arnauld! Arnauld! are you mad?" she gasped, as she vainly struggled to free herself. Elsa was young, hardly more than a child, and, as usual with German girls, not ignorant of the meaning of sex; but, as yet, her own woman's nature had remained unawakened. Now, under the ardour of Arnauld's kisses, her womanhood suddenly awoke, and although she continued to struggle to free herself, it gave her a delicious thrill to feel him crushing her to him and his kisses burning upon her lips.

Then she ceased even to struggle, and yielded herself to him with all the abandon of a woman who loves and who believes herself to be beloved. And now she gave him kiss for kiss, and every one of his caresses only thrilled her the more. She murmured words of love to him, words which had never before passed her girlish lips, but which come so easily to a woman when she loves. So the time passed on, until Arnauld's passion had spent itself, and the lengthening shadows warned them it was time to return home. Then Elsa, with her arms around his neck, spoke the words which brought a terrible disillusionment.

"Arnauld," she said tenderly, looking up at him, "you are younger than Hans, but I know that, in spite of that, I have always loved you. And now I am yours—all yours—and I shall never marry Hans!"

Arnauld looked at her coldly. The passion had all died out of him, leaving him cold and indifferent. He was

supremely satisfied with himself at what had happened, but that Elsa should imagine he was in *love* with her was extremely boring! It was a good thing he was returning to Potsdam to-morrow, otherwise the girl might become very annoying. Perhaps it was better to disillusion her at once? . . .

"Elsa," he said, disengaging himself from her embrace, "I am afraid I have behaved rather badly, I suppose I must have lost my head completely; but I think, as things are, it would be better for you to marry Hans. He loves you very dearly, and . . ." He broke off as he caught sight of Elsa's rigid face.

"But, Arnauld," she said, and her voice was scarcely above a whisper, "don't you love me? I don't understand. If you do not, why—why?"

The words died away on her lips, and she could only gaze at him in frozen horror. He looked away, and desperately the truth burst from him.

"If you *must* know the truth, I *don't* love you! I have never loved any one. Perhaps I am too young. But I was determined you should be mine before anybody else's! I don't know why. I suppose I am mad. I'm sorry if it makes you unhappy."

He stopped speaking, for his voice had fallen on deaf ears. Elsa lay unconscious at his feet.

The next day Arnauld left for Potsdam.

## PART III.

*(Eight years have elapsed. The Monarchy has been re-established, and August Wilhelm, the ex-Kaiser's fourth son, is Emperor.)*

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1934.

The Man.

## CHAPTER I.

THE ballroom was overpoweringly hot, and all the women were fanning themselves frantically in the endeavour to keep cool. The men stood listlessly about, trying their utmost to maintain their stiff military pose; but, in their tight uniforms and collars which nearly choked them, they only succeeded in looking utterly wretched. The perspiration poured from their faces—even flirtation succumbed to the heat of the August night. Only the couples who were fortunate enough to be standing near the windows kept up a semblance of conversation—a dreary affair, this state-ball given in honour of the betrothal of the Crown Prince William with a Princess of Mosenfeldt-Weinberg.

A Royal quadrille, in which the Royal couple had been dutifully dancing, was nearly at an end, and the young Crown Prince cast longing glances toward the open windows where he hoped to escape in a few minutes.

He glanced at his fiancée beside him. She was not what

one would term inspiring. It was evident that, like every one else, she was suffering from the heat; and just at the moment the Prince looked at her, a drop of perspiration began to roll down her long, aquiline nose, and her straight, colourless hair hung in damp wisps upon her forehead.

An expression of disgust crossed the Prince's weak, handsome face, and again he looked longingly across the room to the windows.

A group of four people was standing there, and, judging from their good-humoured expressions, they at least were not suffering from the general discomfort.

As the Prince glanced towards them, one of the group, a young woman in the early twenties, turned; and the Prince caught his breath sharply and almost forgot to bow in return to the curtsy which his angular and perspiring fiancée was making him to end the figure.

He looked again, but the girl had turned her back.

Like all the Hohenzollerns, he was extremely impressionable, and the face he had just seen had fired his listless senses.

He glanced again impatiently at his fiancée, and a wave of unreasoning anger swept through him. Why had they chosen such an ugly woman for his wife? Surely there were some eligible Princesses in the world who were not hideous, and who dressed in soft clinging garments, not in white muslins with sashes?

The girl at the window would never dress like that, he was sure. And her hair, though almost the same colour as the Princess Amelia's, had seemed, in that swift glance, to be full of light, not dull and looking like tow.

The Prince's reflections were broken off here by his having to plunge into the intricacies of the last figure of the quadrille.

But all things must have an end; and so in a few minutes the last notes sounded, and the Royal group returned to their places on the raised dais.

The Prince, after a few minutes' conversation with different members of the Royal party, excused himself, and strolled off in the direction of the window. As he drew near, the laughing group drew a little apart, the men bowing stiffly and the girls sweeping a profound curtesy. The Prince had only eyes for the face that had attracted him during the dance, and as she swept the ground in her obeisance, he caught a mocking upward glance from her grey eyes which made him wish that for once he could be just a simple lieutenant, not hedged in by all this Royal etiquette—a simple lieutenant who would be free to dance with the grey-eyed girl, free to talk to her, make love to her, before the whole world—free, if he wished it, to ask her to be his wife, instead of the angular person with whom he would have to pass his life.

He smothered a sigh, and nodded familiarly to the young officers.

"I have been envying you for the past hour," he said, smiling; "first, you have been able to secure the only cool place in the room, and, secondly, you have found the most charming companions."

And he glanced graciously towards the girls who were now standing a little apart.

"Will your Highness allow me the honour of presenting the Countess Hedwig Rosenberg and my cousin, Fräulein Elsa Siebert?"

The speaker was a heavy young man in the uniform of the Dragoons.

"My dear von Messing, the honour is mine," said the Prince, bowing to the two girls, as again they swept him a profound curtesy.

"I believe I had the pleasure of meeting you, Countess, last winter, in Vienna, at the Princess von Schwartzberg's?" he continued. "But this must be your first visit to Berlin, Fräulein Siebert? I am certain I have not met *you* before."

Elsa Siebert smiled.

"Your Highness is right. I came to Berlin only two weeks ago. The Emperor has been gracious enough to appoint me one of the ladies-in-waiting to your sister, Princess Louise."

The Prince's face lighted up.

"In that case we shall often meet, Fräulein Siebert. My sister is fortunate in having such a charming companion. My mother usually chooses the most boring people for her—excellent young ladies, of course, but . . ."

He turned abruptly, and indicated a group of perspiring people who were standing just out of earshot.

"Look, you can judge for yourself."

Elsa and the others turned and looked at the group he indicated.

Two were obviously sisters. As far as one could judge, they might have been anything from nineteen to twenty-five years of age. Both were dressed exactly alike, in white with pink sashes round their waists. Their blonde hair was pulled tightly back from their round, florid faces, and each wore a large butterfly bow perched on the top of her head. They were listening with great attention to their companion, a short, stout woman, with a little snub nose, on which was set a pair of pince-nez. The top of her head was surmounted by small ostrich plumes, which nodded and bobbed about as she shook her head in the animation of her discourse.

She was now bending forward towards her two companions and speaking behind her large ostrich feather fan; every now and then the three glanced guiltily round as though afraid of being overheard.

"Your future companions, Fräulein Siebert," said the Prince to Elsa, "the Fräulein Martha, and Hannah von Dreien, and the Baroness Echelhardt; you may be sure somebody's reputation is being sent to the devil. The Baroness always nods her feathers like that, and speaks behind her fan, when she has some particularly scandalous news to impart."

"I hope she is not talking about us," said Hedwig von Rosenberg, laughing; "she was casting furious glances in our direction a few minutes ago."

"I expect it is Elsa who will come in for the worst of it," said Hans von Messing. "She never leaves a pretty woman with even a shred of reputation."

Elsa gave a pretended shiver of alarm.

"You are all too bad, really! I feel terrified already! What will happen to me when I come into close quarters with the Baroness?"

The Prince smiled at her reassuringly.

"Let us make a defensive and offensive alliance against the Baroness, Fräulein Elsa, and I'll guarantee that we will prove a match even for her."

Elsa looked up at him with laughing eyes, and blushed slightly as she met the young man's ardent gaze.

"Your Highness does me too much honour. An alliance with such an insignificant person as myself cannot be necessary. It is you who command here."

"My commands will be those of my fair ally," answered the Prince gallantly. "So we will make the compact, won't

we, and brave the danger together?" He held out his hand with a gesture of frankness.

Elsa put her little white-gloved hand in his, and he held it for a moment clasped in his own; then he released it abruptly and turned to von Messing.

"What are you doing this evening, von Messing?" he asked. "If you have nothing better to do, we might go to the Tabarin."

"I shall be charmed, your Highness," said von Messing, bowing, "and, afterwards, if you will do me the honour to come to my rooms, we can have supper and a game of cards. I have some other men coming who will make up the party."

"An excellent idea," cried the Prince, slapping him on the shoulder. "Of course, I accept. In a few minutes the Emperor and Empress will retire, and then we'll be off. By the way, where is von Hartweg? I don't see him here to-night."

At the name of von Hartweg, Elsa started and turned pale; luckily the others were too much engrossed in their conversation to notice her confusion. Recovering herself quickly, she listened with anxiety for her cousin's answer.

"I don't know where he is, your Highness," von Messing answered, looking around. "We were together this morning, and he said he would be here, but I expect some duty has kept him. You know how seriously he takes his profession."

"Ah, yes, he is a born soldier," answered the Prince. "But," he added, looking round the room and frowning, "I wanted him to come to the Tabarin with me this evening particularly, and I don't understand why he is not here yet. He promised he would come."

"Is it Lieutenant Arnauld von Hartweg your Highness is speaking of?"

It was Elsa who was speaking; nobody hearing the question would have guessed how tumultuously the speaker's heart was beating.

"Yes, but he is Captain von Hartweg now," answered the Prince, "one of our most brilliant officers, and my best friend. Do you know him?"

"Oh, I knew him years ago in Harzburg, when he was a cadet."

Elsa had herself well in hand now, and her voice was a study in indifference.

"The Emperor is moving," said von Messing suddenly.

The Prince started.

"Then I must go and pay my respects to my fiancée. I won't be long. Meet me in twenty minutes at the side gate. We shall probably find von Hartweg at the Tabarin. Auf wiedersehen, ladies! Don't forget our compact, Fräulein Siebert."

And, bowing to the two girls, he rushed away to join the Royal party, who were already beginning to make their tour of the ballroom before retiring.

Von Messing made a grimace.

"Poor William! I don't envy him his fiancée. Thank God I was not born a Royal Prince, and can choose a wife where I like!" And he cast an admiring glance at Elsa.

"And may we know who the happy woman is who will be honoured by your choice?"

Von Messing and the two girls turned round quickly at the sound of the clear, sarcastic voice, and Elsa found herself once more face to face with Arnauld von Hartweg.

"My dear fellow, - how you startled me!" said von Messing, grasping Arnauld's hand; "where have you been

hiding yourself? The Prince was looking for you everywhere."

"I could not get off duty before; there were a thousand-and-one things to do," answered Arnould.

He had not changed much in the eight years that had elapsed since that day he had left Elsa in the forest in the Harz. The boy had given place to the man, but his face still bore the stamp of effeminate beauty and cold insolence which Lotta Wendt had left as a heritage to her son.

His splendid figure was set off to advantage by his tight-fitting black Hussar uniform, and he carried himself with the same unconscious grace that had distinguished him as a boy.

"How do you do, Countess?" he said, bowing over Hedwig Rosenberg's hand.

He glanced at Elsa without any apparent sign of recognition.

"Have you forgotten my cousin, Elsa Siebert?" asked von Messing. "You used to be great friends in Harzburg when we were all children there together, and I was fearfully jealous of you."

"It is so long ago that both Captain von Hartweg and myself may be forgiven if we have quite forgotten each other's existence."

Elsa's voice sounded cold and indifferent as she returned the look of polite interest with which Arnould was scrutinising her.

"Ah, of course, I remember now," he said quickly. "You must forgive me, but eight years makes such a difference." From the way he spoke, it was evident that the episode in the forest had quite passed out of his mind, and he was about to add some other platitude when the appearance

of the Royal party prevented all further conversation. At the same moment the Countess Rosenberg came hurrying towards them.

"I have been looking for you both everywhere," she said irritably to the two girls. "In a few minutes, the Royal party will have retired, and I want to get home. Ah, how do you do, Hans? I suppose you have been helping these two girls to hide from me, and you also, Captain von Hartweg?"

Arnauld raised a protesting hand.

"I assure you, Countess," he said smilingly, "that I have only just arrived. You must blame von Messing. I found them all together near this window."

"Well, well, I will forgive you all this time, and you can both come and lunch with me to-morrow. But they must come with me now."

Both young men bowed.

"I shall be delighted," said von Messing.

"And I also," echoed Arnauld.

Then the Countess hustled off the girls, like a hen driving her chicken before her; and the two men were left alone.

"Where are we going?" asked Arnauld, as they both shouldered their way through the crowd of dancers.

"First to the Tabarin; then to supper at my rooms. The Prince is meeting us at the gates," answered von Messing. "Ah, how good it is to be able to breathe again!" and he drew a long breath, as they crossed the courtyard and went towards a large automobile which was waiting at the gate.

"We must wait a moment for the Prince," said von Messing.

He had hardly spoken when a slight figure emerged from the main entrance and walked rapidly towards them.

"I thought I should never get away," said William, as he joined them and sprang into the car. "Now, Arnould, tell that fellow to drive like the devil, or we shall miss the enchanting Lillie Marx."

And, laughing like a school-boy, the Prince was driven into the night with his two companions.

## CHAPTER II.

THE "Silberne Glocke" in Hanover was not outwardly an inviting hostel, and one wondered what fantastic idea had inspired the first proprietor to bestow such a name upon its dark forbiddingness.

The house itself was very old, and the entrance to the restaurant was through a low archway, and across a dark courtyard.

The first room one entered was a long, low-raftered place with oak panels, and adorned all round with hunting trophies—boars' heads, one or two splendid pairs of antlers, and an enormous stuffed "Auer hann" (a species of blackcock) formed part of the scheme of decoration.

The room was furnished with a number of small wooden tables and benches.

At the farthest end of the room, one saw through a half-open door another much smaller room, which for the moment seemed unoccupied.

Men and women were seated at the tables, all drinking beer; the men smoking long pipes, making the room so thick with smoke, that one could scarcely see across it.

At one table, near the door, two men were seated; and it was evident, from the way they glanced at their watches every few minutes, that they were impatiently awaiting the arrival of someone who was already late.

Both men, from their dress and appearance, gave one the impression of two members of the lower middle class, men who had come in to drink their beer, and have a smoke after the labours of the day. But a closer inspection would have

shown one hands too white for men of the station their dress proclaimed, and their speech, although they had pitched their voices almost to a whisper, had nothing of the guttural hardness of those around them.

"They are nearly half an hour late," said the elder of the two, impatiently pulling out his watch for perhaps the twentieth time.

"Perhaps there were difficulties. The woman may have cried off at the last moment," replied the other, glancing towards the door. "But I hardly think so; she wants revenge, and will stop at nothing."

He had hardly finished speaking, when the door was thrown open, and two men, accompanied by a woman (evidently of the working class) entered, and, without casting a glance at the other occupants, walked straight through to the half-open door at the end, and disappeared.

In a few minutes, the two who had been waiting got up quietly and followed them. They entered the room and closed the door carefully behind them.

The three occupants rose, the woman casting a half-frightened glance at her companions. Judging from the deferential way the others treated him, the elder man of the two who had been waiting in the café was a person of some importance.

"Why are you late?" he said curtly, making an impatient sign to his companions to seat themselves. "We have been waiting for over an hour."

He took no notice of the woman, but addressed himself to the two men.

"Your Highness, we were delayed; Schmidt received a communication which had to be attended to at once."

"And what was that communication?" The speaker glanced sharply at Schmidt, a thin, red-haired little man,

with a cunning, clean-shaven face. "It must have been extremely important to prevent you being here at the appointed time."

The arrogant tone in which the speaker uttered this last sentence showed he was little accustomed to be kept waiting.

"Your Highness can judge for yourself," answered Schmidt dryly, taking from his pocket some papers which he handed to the Prince.

The latter took them and began reading intently.

When he had finished, he remained plunged in thought for a few minutes.

"So," he said at last, "this is what August Wilhelm is hatching, another war?"

He picked up the documents again, scanning them carefully. "It is evident from these papers that the military party is somewhat in doubt how the people will take the idea. Here," picking up another paper, "is a list of all the important people belonging to the anti-war party in Berlin; also the names of the leaders in Hamburg, Hanover and Leipzig. It seems our good friend Kaufmann has indeed been at work! How did these fall into your hands?"

Schmidt laughed his characteristic harsh, dry little laugh, which in reality had nothing of mirth about it, but was more of an explosive sneer.

"Highness, in my capacity as an agent of the Secret Service, I was at Kaufmann's to report on a certain Jew, who has been under suspicion for a long time, when Kaufmann called me into his office and gave me the names of several of our party, telling me to have them watched, and to bring in a report on them every day. Whilst he was still giving me instructions a man came in, whom I recog-

nised as one of the special messengers, and Kaufmann gave him a packet to be taken at once to the Palace.

"Acting on impulse, I made some excuse and, hurrying from the room, ran downstairs as quickly as possible and into the street, where I saw my man just turning the corner; I soon caught him up, and it was not difficult to enter into conversation with him, as he had seen me speaking to Kaufmann. It was warm, and I proposed a glass of beer. My friend was nothing loth; and, well, your Highness is not unacquainted with my methods. He was soon in an idiotic state, and in a very short time subsided under the table. I soon got hold of Kaufmann's packet, and, finding it contained other reports which were of no interest to us, I merely extracted these, and closed the packet again, replacing it in my slumbering friend's pocket. Then, after telling the waiter to awaken him in an hour's time, I came on here as quickly as possible. When Kaufmann hears that the papers were not in the packet, he will imagine that he has made some mistake and forgotten to put them in."

The Prince nodded approvingly.

"You have done well, Schmidt. This news is of the greatest importance to us. Now, what about this woman?"

Schmidt turned and looked at the woman, who up to now had remained silent, and had been gazing at the speakers as though vainly trying to understand the drift of their conversation.

"What this woman knows," he said slowly, "would be enough to raise another revolution all over Germany."

The Prince looked at her.

"Speak," he said. "What do you know?"

"What will you promise me if I tell you?" asked the woman sullenly. "I don't want to be the means of more bloodshed. There has been enough; and it is to prevent it

I have come here to-night, and"—here she paused, and her face took on an expression of animal ferocity—"I have come here to-night because that man," pointing to Schmidt, "has promised me revenge."

"You shall have your revenge," said the Prince. "Now speak!"

Her eyes flashed.

"Do you swear it?" she said.

"I swear it," he answered simply. Something in his face must have reassured her, for a smile of satisfaction flitted for a moment across her features.

Then she began her story.

## CHAPTER III.

"TWENTY years ago, at the time of the great war," the woman said, speaking slowly, "I was a young girl of eighteen, living in a small village in the Thuringenwald. I was married, but three weeks after my marriage my husband was called to the army, and I went back to live with my parents. I was one of the strongest, healthiest girls in the village, and used to do the work of the men who were away fighting in France and in Russia. One day, I remember it well, I was bringing in a load of wood from the forest, and I put down my bundle for a moment to rest; and as I straightened myself up, I noticed two strangers standing a little distance away watching me closely. As neither was dressed in uniform, a novelty in those days, I was rather curious about them, and returned their gaze. Then, picking up my bundle again, I was walking away, when I heard a voice calling me to stop.

"I turned, and, to my surprise, one of the men was walking rapidly towards me. Thinking he wanted some information, I stopped. He came up and asked me if my wood was for sale. In those days, life was hard and money scarce, so I answered 'Yes'; he then told me that he and his companion had taken a house in the neighbourhood, and they wished to get in a supply of wood for the winter. They would, he said, pay me well if I would bring some. He mentioned a sum: it was large, and would keep my parents and myself in comfort for the winter, so I agreed. He then gave me the address, told me at what hour to come; then rejoined his companion.

"I returned home, and told my parents of the good luck that had fallen in our way.

"The next day, in the afternoon, I took my first load; it was a large house in a lonely part of the forest; and I judged the proprietor to be a man of simple tastes, for there was no sign of luxury, and I only saw two servants, who seemed friendly enough, and the cook, who paid me, insisted on my taking a cup of coffee with her. I remained gossiping for over an hour in the kitchen; she told me her master lived there with only the other man I had seen for company, and that they were busy all day on some scientific experiments. She added that it was very dull there, and that she would be glad if I would come and see her sometimes for a gossip.

"Every day that week I went, until I had only one more load to take; and I felt sorry, as in those days, with our men all away, life was monotonous enough, and I had come to look forward to the hour spent in the warm kitchen talking to the servants. On the last day, the cook was even more friendly than usual, and when I got up to go insisted on my taking another cup of coffee and a schnaps to warm me, as she said. I did so. The kitchen was hot, and, little by little, I felt my head beginning to swim, and the cook's voice sounding farther and farther away. Then I knew no more. I don't know how long I remained unconscious but, when I came to myself, I found I was lying on a couch in a large room, with the man I had spoken to in the wood bending over me. . . . I felt frightened and tried to get up, but he spoke to me gently, telling me the heat of the kitchen had proved too much for me, and I had fainted, and they had brought me to his room to revive me. Then he gave me some water, and in a few minutes I felt well enough to get up; but for some unexplainable reason I felt

terrified and only wanted to get away from the house and the man as quickly as I could.

"Some nameless dread filled me; and that night, when I reached home and had gone to bed, I lay awake for many hours haunted by the same unaccountable foreboding.

"The weeks passed, and gradually the impression began to wear off, until one day, when I was helping my mother with some work in the house, I was seized with a sudden faintness. My mother laid me on the bed, and called to an old woman who was passing, a noted herbalist of the village, who also followed the profession of midwife. This old woman looked at me strangely, when my mother told her I had fainted, and asked me some questions; then when we were alone for a moment, she bent over me and whispered: 'Who is your lover, girl? He must know.' . . . I looked at her with terrified eyes. 'Know what? My *lover*! . . . I have no lover, I don't understand!' I said desperately.

"The old woman looked at me sternly. 'Don't lie, girl,' she said harshly, 'Your lover must be told the truth—that you are to become a mother!'

"I cannot describe the emotion that swept over me at her words. Now I understood the nameless dread that had filled me during the past weeks. 'But it is impossible,' I said hoarsely; 'Hans left eight months ago, and I love him too well ever to have looked at another man: it is impossible, I tell you.'

"The old woman shook her head. 'We are not living in the days of miracles,' she said dryly, 'and in six months you will become a mother. There are many like you in the villages around,' she added. 'You young things find faithfulness a difficult matter nowadays.'

"With that, she turned and left the room, and I was left alone. The only impression I had was that it was all

a hideous dream, from which I would awake in a few minutes. But, alas, it was no dream, and the terrible reality had to be faced; then, whilst I lay there thinking, like a flash came the memory of that night at the house in the forest—first my faint, and then finding myself in the man's room afterwards. It was he then who had ruined me? With a cry, like a wild beast's, I jumped up and rushed out of the house.

"It was dusk when I reached that accursed house, but I knew my way, and I walked straight into the kitchen; the cook was seated before the fire, but at my entrance she jumped up with a startled cry.

"‘I want to see your master,’ I said shortly.

"The woman looked at me with frightened eyes.

"‘You can't,’ she said; ‘he is occupied at present,’ and she put herself between me and the door. She was a bigger woman than I, but fury had given me twice my usual strength, and, with a laugh, I pushed her aside, and she fell heavily, her head coming in contact with the big oak dresser.

"In a moment, I was out of the room and up the stairs. I reached the hall, and was hesitating in which direction to search, when I heard voices coming from a room at the farthest end, and the handle of the door was turned. What made me do it, I do not know, but, without stopping to think, I hid myself behind a heavy curtain, where I could see and hear without being observed. A second later the man I had come to see came out of the room with two officers. They were speaking together, and as the light fell on their faces, I started and my knees began to tremble, for I recognised the features of His Majesty, the Emperor. They stopped near my hiding-place, and I heard plainly what they said. At first it was difficult for me to under-

stand, I was too frightened; but gradually I began to follow the drift of their conversation, and then I understood.

“What they said is written in this paper. It is enough to say that I was only one victim among many hundreds, used by the Emperor and his accomplices in a fiendish and unnatural scheme. When they had passed by, and the great front door had closed behind them, I remained for some moments petrified, the utter hopelessness of my position striking me.

“What could I, a poor peasant girl, do against such formidable adversaries? A few minutes later, I crept from my hiding-place, and was about to retrace my steps when a thought struck me, and I entered the room the Emperor and his companions had left. There were many papers on the table, but one bearing a large Imperial seal attracted my eyes. Scarcely knowing why, I picked it up, and thrust it into my pocket; then a panic seized me. I forgot what I had come for; I forgot all; and I rushed out of the room and down the stairs like a mad woman. The cook was still lying as I had left her, breathing heavily, and I crept past, and out into the night.

“It is useless to tell you what I suffered in the weeks that followed; I hid my secret as long as I could; only my mother knew, and when I had told her what I had seen and heard that night up at the house, and showed her the papers I had taken, she was terrified and implored of me to keep quiet and say nothing; the devil was in it, she said, and I believed so, too. Then one day Hans came home. At first, I thought he would kill me; in fact, at the bottom of my heart I hoped he would, for life had become unbearable to me; but before I died I wanted him to know that I had never been unfaithful to him. So I told him all as

I had told my mother, and when he had read the paper, he too turned pale and crossed himself.

“‘The Emperor’s orders!’ he muttered; then a sudden fury seized him. ‘May he be accursed—he and all who are dear to him! And *we* must give our lives for such a man as he!’”

“Then he turned to me and held out his arms. ‘My dear,’ he said, drawing me close to him, ‘because we are only poor peasant people, they think we can do nothing. Judging from this paper, there are many victims such as you; but, listen—as there is a God above, I swear we will be avenged!’”

“I trembled, for I knew he meant what he said. The next day he left for the front, and, a week later, the papers were full of an attempt that had been made on the Emperor’s life by a wretched madman, whose intentions had been frustrated by the vigilance of the guards. The unhappy man had fallen, pierced by a dozen bayonets, before he could renew his attempt. No name was given, but I knew it was Hans who had tried to avenge himself and me.”

“Some months later my child was born; but from the first I hated it, and when a few weeks later some people came with a Government order that the child was to be placed at the orphanage at Darmstadt, I gave him up without a pang. Since then I have only lived for revenge, and that is why, when this man promised it to me, I came here to-night. That is all I have to say. Here are the papers; all I have told you is written down there, and here is the paper signed by the late Emperor.”

## CHAPTER IV.

FOR a few minutes after the woman had ceased speaking, there was silence. The Prince and Schmidt were eagerly devouring the paper, signed by the ex-Emperor, which the woman had brought. Suddenly the former brought his fist down on the table with an oath.

"If this were once known, it would be enough to make the people rise *en masse* throughout the whole of Prussia! Apparently, the dreadful scheme was introduced to my father by the then Crown Prince," reading again, "and had the support of them both. Heavens! if the masses were to realise that hundreds of them have been used as mere machines to produce creatures to be butchered to further the ambitions of the Hohenzollerns, every man and woman would rise and cry out for revenge!"

"And the unfortunate beings themselves," put in Schmidt. "Does not your Highness see that they themselves would be an important factor in the game if once they understood the *raison d'être* of their being?"

The Prince grew thoughtful. "Yes, indeed," he said, after a few moments; "if they have turned out to be what my father and brother and their accomplices hoped they would, the Beast must be very strong in them; in fact it must predominate. Listen!—'*No religion save the Fatherland; no God but the Emperor,*'" quoting from the paper in his hand.

"Yes, your Highness," said Schmidt; "but even in a cage, once arouse the beast, and it will turn and rend its keeper."

"I wonder who this Werner is, to whom this paper seems to have been made out?" said the Prince, again picking up the document signed by the ex-Kaiser.

"I think I can tell your Highness," interposed one of the other men, speaking for the first time. His three companions turned and looked at him; the woman's eyes sparkled.

"Ah, you know him?" she said eagerly.

"No," answered the man, "but I know *of* him. I remember before the war, in 1913, when I was a student at Weimar, the students were always speaking of the scientific experiments made by a certain Professor Werner of Jena University. Some were supposed to be of the most astounding character, and we were all very anxious to meet the great man. Then the war broke out, and more serious matters occupied our minds."

"If that is the man," put in Schmidt, "he retired from Jena at the end of the year 1914, soon after the commencement of the war, and he died some six or seven years ago at Goslar in the Harz. I remember the papers were full of his obituary notices."

"That must be our man; I imagine," said the Prince. "What we must do now is to trace his life since his retirement. In a scheme like this, all must have been placed on a very systematic basis. All these creatures must bear some distinctive mark. A man like Werner will certainly have left in his papers an exact diagnosis of his experiments. This, Schmidt, will be your business to trace; then, when we have gathered all the facts together, we shall be able to see what material we have to work on. Meanwhile, you, Franz, can continue to spread and augment the discontent already existing among the people. And you," turning

towards the woman, "I promise you your vengeance shall be as great as you can desire."

He turned towards the door; then stopped abruptly, and came back to the table.

"An idea has just struck me," he said, addressing the woman again. "You must go to the orphanage where they took your child in Darmstadt, and ask particulars as to where he is and what has become of him."

He took some gold pieces from a purse, and placed them on the table.

"Here is the money for your journey; when you have traced the boy, and, if possible, seen him, return here and communicate with Schmidt. If we can trace one," he continued, turning towards the other men, "it will not be difficult to find the others. Come with me, von Ploetz; there are still some instructions I have to give you on another matter," and, turning on his heel, Prince Eitel Friedrich left the room, followed by von Ploetz.

## CHAPTER V.

"FRÄULEIN SIEBERT, have you forgotten our compact?"

Elsa started, and looked up quickly from the book she had been reading, and found the Crown Prince standing before her. It was more than three weeks since the ball; and now, for the past fortnight, she had been taken up with her duties as lady-in-waiting to the Princess Louise, and she had not found it an altogether unmixed joy. The old Baroness von Ecklehardt and her companions were always pulling someone's reputation to pieces; and Elsa, who had been brought up in a more liberal and large-minded manner by her father, found it difficult to take part in their conversations; the consequence was that they avoided her, and at times, in spite of the gaiety of her surroundings, she felt lonely, and longed to be back in Goslar.

Since the night of the ball, she had avoided the young Prince as much as possible, as she knew only too well the construction which the Court would put on any friendliness which might appear to exist between them. But to-day she felt particularly lonely, and it was with real pleasure that she found him standing beside her.

"Your Highness is very good to deign to remember a few silly words spoken in jest," she said, looking up into his laughing face.

The Prince took her hand and kissed it.

"Words spoken in jest are often more true than those uttered seriously, and I want us to be friends, Fräulein Siebert, if you will honour me by your friendship."

Elsa laughed, and withdrew her hand.

"I fear there can be no friendship between His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Prussia and simple Elsa Siebert."

The Prince shuddered.

"Fräulein Siebert, I implore of you; let me forget for a few happy minutes, when I am with you, that I am the Crown Prince; let me imagine that I am a simple lieutenant in the Hussars on whom you have been good enough to bestow your friendship."

Elsa looked at him. Though there was still a smile upon his lips, the tone he spoke in was almost passionate in its eagerness. For the first time, she began to be almost sorry for this handsome young man who had apparently everything the world could give, and yet pleaded so earnestly for her friendship. Inwardly, she felt flattered, as all young women do when a man asks her to be his friend, blinding themselves to the fact that it is, in nine cases out of ten, only another word for love. So Elsa, acting as any other girl would have acted in the circumstances, held out her hand frankly, and said:

"If my friendship is of any value to your Highness, it is yours."

William took the little hand, and held it closely in his.

"It is the most precious gift I have ever received," he said seriously. "May I prove worthy of it! But, what is the matter? Have I said anything to offend you?"

Elsa withdrew her hand, and turned away from the Prince's questioning glance. His words had stirred within her memories of the past, memories which she had tried to stifle, but which, as now, a chance word would suffice to re-awaken. Who was *she* to listen to men speaking of being worthy of her friendship? She, who . . . she shuddered involuntarily. Could she *never* forget?

"It is nothing, your Highness," she said, trying to speak lightly; "you must not trouble yourself about me; I have a slight headache this afternoon, and the heat has tired me a little."

William looked at her reproachfully. "Fräulein Siebert, have you forgotten your promise so soon? It is not like this that we try to deceive our *friends*. Something is the matter and you won't tell me. Won't you trust me?"

He caught both her hands again in his, holding them tightly in his eagerness. She looked up at him, then her eyes fell, and she turned away.

"I do not withdraw what I have already given," she answered in a low voice, "but . . ."

"Your Highness, His Majesty desires your presence at once."

The Prince and Elsa started apart.

They had both been too absorbed in their conversation to notice the approach of the officer who now stood bowing before them.

William frowned.

"Can I never have a moment's peace?" he muttered to himself. Then, bowing formally to Elsa, he said: "Forgive me, Fräulein Siebert, I must leave you, and see what my father wants." And he followed the officer out of the room.

He found the Emperor seated at his writing-desk with two Generals; they were all leaning over the table studying some maps and papers that were spread out before them. The Emperor glanced up as his son entered.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "where have you been? I sent Schaeffer to look for you half an hour ago! Look at these papers; then I will tell you what you have to do."

William picked up the papers and sighed; it was so much pleasanter to be talking of friendship and holding a pretty

girl's hand than to be shut up in this dark room, looking at papers full of reports and statistics which spoke of War—War again! And War on a still more colossal scale than the terrible War of 1914, which had lost his grandfather his kingdom. The Crown Prince loathed the very idea. Life was so agreeable in Berlin; and again he sighed. But long experience had taught him that the quickest way to end these annoying discussions was to appear interested, so he obediently glanced at the papers given him.

After a few minutes' silence, he looked at the Emperor.

"But I don't understand," he said hesitatingly. "These reports speak of the invasion of England in six months' time. And the last private report issued by the Admiralty acknowledged that the strength of the Fleet would not be sufficient to make such an attempt for another three years. As for the army, it seems to me that it is better not to overrate our forces in that direction. Even granting that our strength is sufficient, the idea of another war, and the possibility of another failure, would not be too favourably received by the people."

The Emperor laughed scornfully.

"It is not on the force of the Army or Navy that we shall count *this time*; the invasion of England will not be made by force, but by strategy. Do you see that?" and he pushed a small map of Belgium across the table. William looked at it mechanically.

"Well, do you propose the same *coup* as in 1914?" he asked sarcastically. "The invasion of Belgium, &c., with the same result? You forget that such things cannot be repeated with impunity."

"No, we do not intend to invade Belgium. As I told you a moment ago, we are not counting on force this time, but on strategy."

William shrugged his shoulders. His father was speaking in riddles.

"I don't understand," he said irritably. The sunlight threw a gleam across the table which made him think of the light in Elsa's hair; he thought how sweet she would look with it all hanging loose on her shoulders. It must be long and soft, as a woman's hair should be; hair that would curl and cling around your fingers, that you could bury your face in, and forget all about wars and invasions; hair that . . . His father's harsh voice brought him back to the material moment with a start.

"In 1915, when we occupied the mines around Longwy and Douai, some of our engineers (amongst them, some who had assisted in the greatest engineering feat of the world, the tunnel through the Andes) formed a project, which, if the invasion of England failed then, as it did, would ensure success later; do you know what that project was?" The Emperor leaned forward, and his face twitched with excitement. "A tunnel that would reach across Belgium, under the sea, to England!"

William burst out laughing.

"It sounds like a dream of Jules Verne or Wells," he said boyishly.

"Yes, it sounds like a dream, but to-day the dream is a reality. The tunnel already exists!"

"What?" William jumped to his feet, for the first time aroused out of his indifference. "You mean to say that this miracle has been accomplished?"

The Emperor turned to one of the Generals. "Repeat to His Highness the report you gave me an hour ago."

The General cleared his throat.

"Your Highness must know," he began, "that when, in 1918, we were forced by the terms of the armistice to

evacuate that part of France, the mines near Longwy were left in a disastrous state, and the French Government, soon after the peace of 1919, accepted the offer made by an apparently authentic American company, to work the mines, giving them a concession of fifty years; and a capital of five million francs was found. The directors of the company could all produce proofs of American citizenship; they were respectively Joseph von Bloxen, Henry W. Weid, and John Rosembaum, American Jews of undeniable patriotism. The miners employed were mostly of French or Belgian nationality, in fact there was nothing that could raise the suspicions of the most ardent French patriot. But, in one part, a work had been going on, commenced during the war, and continued with all the ardour and tenacity of our race—the work of excavation and tunnelling that has been carried on day and night ever since. Our engines, like great ants, bored, excavated, and penetrated beneath the soil of France—like a malignant disease for which there is no cure, but of which the subject himself is unconscious—beneath a part of Belgium, beneath the grey waters of the North Sea, to the vital point, England. And, to-day, the work is accomplished, and the English who defied us in 1914, will, at a given moment, find the steel of German bayonets at their hearts. In short, your Highness, the tunnel is finished.”

When the General had finished speaking, William remained staring at him for a moment as though fascinated. Then he drew a long breath.

“It is the most wonderful thing that has ever been accomplished,” he said, “but,” and he hesitated, “do you think you will find the army ready to respond to a new call to arms? Do you think they will be ready to enter again into all the horrors of war? There are many who still

remember the great War. I fear there will not be much enthusiasm."

A cold smile crossed the Emperor's face.

"They will soon be enthusiastic when they know England has been invaded; and those are not the men whom we shall choose at first. The men chosen for the enterprise have been carefully picked. These men have no will but mine, no God, no religion, no ideas but those I have decreed for them."

William gazed at his father in astonishment.

"But such men do not exist any more in Germany since the last war," he said. "It is no secret that the spirit of revolt has again been slowly fermenting for the past ten years. Our having brought militarism again to the fore has only served to irritate the people; the smaller states of Germany are only waiting for the moment to rise against the kingdom of Prussia. You may be sure that they will never again be willing to draw their swords for us; therefore, where do you imagine you will be able to find, now, this army of men who would be nothing but your creatures, and who would hold their lives so cheaply?"

An expression of great cunning crossed the Emperor's face.

"Twenty years ago your grandfather and the Crown Prince, your uncle, foresaw what the state of the German Empire would become, and took their precautions; they knew it would be necessary to have some thousands of men on whom the Emperor could count, not only in the event of war, but as a safeguard to himself and his throne. To this end, they created, with Werner, who is now dead, thousands of men, creatures who belong to the Emperor body and soul, but also creatures who can conquer the world if necessary."

"But who are they? Where do they come from, these invincibles you speak of?"

William looked at his father in bewilderment. If it had not been for the presence of the two Generals, he would have thought that the man before him had become suddenly demented.

"You will know all in good time," returned the Emperor coldly. "I sent for you now to tell you this so that you would not be unprepared for the coming events; also it is necessary for you to leave to-night for Magdeburg to open the new military Academy there, which I had promised to do. But as affairs necessitate my presence here, you will go in my stead. Show yourself as much as possible. It is arranged that all kinds of public demonstrations of loyalty are to be encouraged. The idea of your marriage ought to give rise to a great deal of popular enthusiasm."

William made a grimace. Any allusion to his approaching marriage filled him with profound disgust. And then to be sent off to Magdeburg at a moment's notice just when he was beginning to enjoy himself with Elsa . . .

"How long shall I be away?" he asked sulkily.

The Emperor consulted a paper.

"You will leave to-night, as I told you; the day after to-morrow you will open the Academy. The next day you will be present at the unveiling of the Hindenburg statue. On the following day, the Burgermeister, in the name of the citizens of Magdeburg, has begged the permission to present the gifts which the city are offering you on your marriage; and the next three days will be taken up with the various festivities which are being given in your honour. So you will return to Berlin next week."

William groaned inwardly. A whole week of speeches, dinners, gala performances, stuffy Burgermeisters and their

dull and stolid spouses! No amusement at all; nothing but boredom from first to last! He rose to his feet.

"Very well," he said, "I suppose I *must* go. Is that all you have to tell me?"

The Emperor looked at him keenly.

"One moment," he said. "Whom were you speaking to when I sent Schaeffer to look for you?"

William flushed up to the roots of his blonde hair. "I was speaking to Fräulein Siebert," he answered uneasily. "Why?"

"Elsa Siebert," echoed the Emperor, his small obliquely-set eyes still fixed on his son's face, and not taking any notice of his question. "You have good taste. She is the prettiest girl we have at Court, but I must beg of you to avoid any scandals before your marriage; afterwards—" he shrugged his shoulders, "you can do as you like."

The boy's face grew still more confused.

"I don't know what you mean," he said sullenly. "Surely there can be no scandal in my speaking for a few minutes to one of my sister's ladies-in-waiting?"

The Emperor laughed.

"We Hohenzollerns are always fools where a woman is concerned," he answered enigmatically. "But remember what I have told you. Amelia is such a fool that she would most certainly show her resentment if any rumours came to her ears; and the Grand Duke might think it his duty to interfere. Therefore, as we want to avoid any unpleasantness at this moment, there must be no scandals; remember that. In a few weeks you will be free to do as you like. Now you may go."

## CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Arnould von Hartweg entered the Baroness Rosenberg's drawing-room, the "five o'clock" was in full swing.

"How late you are, Lieutenant von Hartweg!" said the Baroness, as he kissed her hand. "We began to despair of your coming."

"Alas, my military duties are to blame for keeping me from such charming company," he said gallantly.

The Baroness laughed. "It is difficult to believe that young lieutenants have such arduous duty. I think it must be something more attractive that keeps you. But I won't be indiscreet, and as you have come now, I shall forgive you. Hedwig," calling to her daughter, who was passing, "take Lieutenant von Hartweg with you and give him some tea."

"Where have you been?" asked Hedwig as they walked together towards the little room where tea was being dispensed, "Elsa and I expected you much earlier."

During the past two weeks, she had met Arnould nearly every day, either playing tennis, riding, at the Court, or at her mother's house, and, as Hedwig had no illusions as to his feelings towards her, a spirit of comradeship had sprung up between them. She knew that Elsa was the attraction which made the young man find an excuse to be with them every day; but Elsa's attitude puzzled her. Sometimes she seemed to almost hate Arnould, and actually feel a physical repulsion at his approach; and, at other times, Hedwig could have sworn she loved him; but any attempt she made to gain her confidence had been unsuccessful. Directly she

mentioned Arnould, Elsa, who was generally willing to discuss any subject Hedwig liked to put forward, would answer indifferently, and would change the subject at the first opportunity.

And Arnould, too, irritated Hedwig at times. What was the good of being the handsomest lieutenant in Berlin, with all the women crazy about you, if you didn't know how to win a girl like Elsa? And, yet, did he *want* to win her?

It was a question that Hedwig often asked herself, for although certainly he was always at their heels, and was most assiduous in his attentions, there was something in his whole air which forbade her to assume the adoring suitor.

The Baroness herself had told Hedwig that she expected Arnould would ask her permission to speak to Elsa; and, as she said, the match was most desirable from every point of view. Von Hartweg's father was well-known to be extremely rich; he, Arnould, was the chosen companion of the Crown Prince, in high favour with the Emperor. In fact, everything was more than satisfactory, and yet the days passed and Elsa remained apparently indifferent and Arnould did not speak. All this came into Hedwig's mind as she stood beside her companion at the tea table, and she sighed impatiently.

"What is the matter?" asked Arnould, pausing in the act of raising a cup to his lips. "You are very silent to-day."

"I was thinking of Elsa," she answered, looking at him with a frown.

"May I ask what calamity has occurred to your charming friend to cause you to wear such a perturbed expression, and to sigh so heavily?" he asked, sipping his tea calmly.

"Nothing has occurred," answered Hedwig, "I was only wondering"—she hesitated—"if she was happy?"

"If outward appearances do not belie her, I should imagine she is in the best of spirits. You can now judge for yourself. She has just come in."

Hedwig looked in the direction he indicated. Elsa had just entered the room, accompanied by a group of young officers. They were all laughing heartily at some remark she had evidently just made. As they approached the place where Hedwig and Arnould were standing, Elsa suddenly caught sight of them, and the expression on her face changed. The smile died away, leaving it hard and set. Arnould, who was watching her, saw the change, and a slight flicker of amusement came into his cold eyes as he slowly followed Hedwig, who had run forward to meet her friend.

"Where have you been all this time?" she cried. "The tea is quite cold, and there are none of your favourite cakes left; Captain von Hartweg was greedy enough to eat the last one."

"Oh, I don't mind at all," said Elsa, hardly glancing at Arnould. "We have been on the tennis-ground all the afternoon, practising for the tournament; and all that my soul desires now is an iced coffee! So you may keep your tea, and Captain von Hartweg is welcome to the cakes if he likes them."

Arnould bowed mockingly. "If I had known they were *your* favourites," he began, but a hand on his shoulder interrupted him.

"Arnould, why were you not at the courts? We wanted you there to put us all in form," said a voice, and, turning round, he found the Major of his regiment behind him.

"I regret, Major, it was impossible; and, besides, I have no intention of taking part in the tournament. For one thing," he added, "I shall probably not be here."

"Not be here? Why? Where are you going? What are you going to do? You have never missed a tournament before."

Arnauld burst out laughing at the consternation depicted on all the faces surrounding him. "I am afraid I can't satisfy your curiosity," he answered lightly. "All that I can tell you is that I shall not be able to play in the tournament."

A look of disappointment came over the faces of the group.

"But, Arnauld," persisted von Messing, "you are our best player; and we are counting on you to beat the Australian. There is not a man in Berlin who has your form."

A chorus of assent came from the others; and Elsa, looking at him, admitted to herself that it was no wonder that, not only in tennis, but in every other sport, there was not a man in Berlin who could compete with Arnauld von Hartweg.

She glanced at his companions, slender, effeminate-looking boys, the production and the result of those terrible years when the shadow of famine had stalked through the high-roads of Europe, and through the streets of her cities—degenerate weaklings born of the war; and then she looked at Arnauld towering above them all, at his slender, graceful figure, each movement full of strength and virile manhood.

Even as a boy how strong his arms had been, and now the boy was a man! She flushed hotly. What was she doing to let her thoughts run away with her like that? Then she became conscious that, although Arnauld was speaking to the others, his eyes were fixed on hers. He was smiling at her with that faintly ironic smile she knew so well; had he divined her thoughts? And, again, she felt herself

flushing hotly. Then, acting on an impulse which she scarcely understood herself, for the first time for many days, she looked him straight in the eyes and smiled.

"Can't we persuade you to stay, Captain von Hartweg?" she said, and her voice was so soft that Hedwig looked sharply at her friend in wonder.

Arnauld stepped nearer to her.

"Do *you* want me to stay?" he asked. For a moment the two stood there, oblivious to all around them; and in that moment it seemed to Elsa that she forgave the past. She only remembered that she had been his, and would be his again if he wished; the scent of the pine forest seemed all around them again, the stillness only broken by the sighing of the wind in the upper branches of the trees—the violins in Nature's orchestra playing for them!

She caught her breath sharply, as, for another second, his eyes held hers; then she looked away, and the crimson deepened on her cheeks.

"Yes," she said, in a voice so low that it reached only his ears, "I want you to stay." Then, she went quickly towards Hedwig, who, with the skill of a born diplomat, had drawn the group a few yards away.

A faint smile of triumph flitted across Arnauld's face, and almost involuntarily he glanced down at his hand, at a few almost imperceptible white points which marked a scar.

"Ah, von Hartweg! Flirting with the little Siebert, I see. You young dogs have all the luck!"

Arnauld turned toward the speaker, a man of about fifty years of age, in the uniform of a staff-officer.

"Not exactly flirting, General," he answered calmly, "I have known Fräulein Siebert since we were children together in Goslar."

The General's eyes looked scrutinisingly into Arnault's face; he had been watching the pair for some minutes, and it flashed through his mind that it would never do for Arnault to get too interested in Elsa Siebert. A stop must be put to it at once; so he put out a random shot to see the effect.

"I hear she is going to marry her cousin, Lieutenant Hans von Messing, of the 12th Dragoons."

The blue eyes looking into his remained unmoved, and the voice that answered him was as cool and indifferent as ever.

"I think you must be misinformed, General. As far as I know, Fräulein Siebert has no intention of betrothing herself to Lieutenant von Messing."

"Ah, perhaps you are right." The General pulled his moustache, and cast another piercing glance at Arnault, "though it would be better for her probably if it were so. She is much too attractive a young woman to remain single. She has already attracted the attention of one high personage at least, and who knows . . . ?"

Arnault gave a slight start, and his eyes became like steel; but in an instant he had command of himself, and when he spoke again no one would have guessed the almost insane rage that was rioting through him.

"You are well informed, General," he said, forcing a smile. "Perhaps it would be interesting to know who is Fräulein Siebert's Royal admirer."

The General burst out laughing.

"My dear von Hartweg, where have your eyes and ears been that you are not *au courant* with the latest scandal in Berlin? But look, it is not necessary for me to give you further details; you can judge for yourself."

Arnauld turned in the direction he indicated; a young man in uniform had just entered the room, and, after giving one quick glance around, had gone straight to the table where Elsa was sitting with her companions.

"Fräulein Siebert," he cried gaily, as he bent to kiss her hand, "you played admirably to-day!"

"Ah!" said Arnauld between his teeth. "The Crown Prince!"

## CHAPTER VII.

"HERE is a report of the information the woman gave me, your Highness."

The speaker was Schmidt, and sitting opposite to him was Prince Eitel Freidrich.

They were in the same tavern where they had met the woman some weeks before; but this evening they were alone. Eitel took the paper and began reading it.

"So," he said, after a few minutes, "according to what the authorities told her, the boy at five years of age was taken away by a man corresponding to the description given of the late Werner to a military college near Leipzig; beyond that they could tell her nothing. She went to Leipzig, but could not trace the boy at all. H'm, so now we must carry our investigations to Leipzig. If the child was taken there, we may be sure there were many others with him. And you, what did you find out in Harzburg?"

Schmidt pulled out a note-book from his pocket.

"Firstly," he began, "Werner came to Harzburg in 1915, and took a large villa on the outskirts of the town; it was known that he spent all his time in scientific experiments, and he lived at the villa with only two servants and his assistant, Müller. The townspeople never caught sight of him except when he sometimes drove through the town in his car. It was therefore with astonishment that some months later, it was known that a Major von Hartweg had arrived at the villa bringing with him a lady; the latter was rarely seen, though the Major often drove into Harz-

burg. For a time, the interest in the Professor died down, but tongues were set wagging again when it became known that an interesting event was expected up at the villa. From time to time, someone caught sight of the Professor walking in the grounds of the villa with the unknown lady; and those who saw her described her as being wonderfully beautiful. Then, one day it was rumoured that a man-child had been brought into the world, but that the mother had lost her life; and, in fact, a few days later a simple funeral left the gates of the villa, and the beautiful woman was buried in the cemetery in Harzburg. As she had lived, she died—unknown. Soon afterwards, Major von Hartweg left, taking the child and a nurse with him; and from that time Harzburg knew him no more, except on the rare occasions when he came to visit the Professor, who continued to live there undisturbed till the day of his death, some five years ago. And that, your Highness, is all the information I could get.”

“You have succeeded beyond my expectations,” said Eitel warmly. “Your information should prove invaluable. So von Hartweg’s father was mixed up in the affair. That is interesting. I wonder what has become of the boy?”

He paused, and suddenly burst out laughing. Schmidt looked at him in astonishment. It was not often that Eitel gave vent to his feelings in such a manner.

“Your Highness . . .,” he began, but the Prince cut him short.

“Schmidt, Schmidt!” he cried. “Have you not realised the joke?” And again he burst into a roar of laughter.

“What joke, your Highness?” he inquired nervously; he was beginning to think the Prince had gone suddenly mad.

"Why, you blockhead!" returned the other, in a choking voice. "Have you not grasped the joke yet? Arnauld von Hartweg, the handsomest lieutenant in the Guards, the darling of Berlin, the chosen friend and companion of the Crown Prince, is nothing but one of Werner's experiments. Oh, it's great," and he went off again into peals of laughter.

Schmidt looked at his master for a moment in astonishment; then his quick mind began to piece facts together. He remembered Arnauld von Hartweg's splendid physique, his extreme intelligence, and his reputation of indifference to the blandishments exercised on him by the fair ladies of the Court and of Berlin; and there were also stories of acts of wanton cruelty and of unspeakable orgies with the Crown Prince in which the name of Arnauld von Hartweg figured first. Such a character would certainly correspond to what Werner had desired to produce by his experiments. Yes, no doubt Eitel was right! Then another idea flashed through his mind.

"But, your Highness," he said, leaning forward eagerly, "if Arnauld von Hartweg is one of Werner's experiments, the present Emperor must certainly know it; and, if *he* knows it, why has he allowed von Hartweg to reach the position he has? What can his motive be? It must be a very strong one for him to permit a creature without name, without kith or kin, a mere nothing, to become his son's intimate friend and the most sought-after man in Berlin."

Eitel sat up in his chair. All the mirth had died out of his face.

"The devil, Schmidt, I believe you are right! As you say, the Emperor *must* know. What reason *can* he have in keeping von Hartweg near him?"

"He must have some very important end in view to do

so," mused Schmidt. "Your Highness," he said, starting forward suddenly, "do you suppose that von Hartweg knows anything of the matter himself?"

"What, the boy? Of course not; look at his bearing towards the world in general, at times almost bordering on insolence; he believes himself to be Colonel von Hartweg's son, with money, youth, good looks, everything a man can ask for. No, believe me, *he* knows nothing."

"And what do you suppose he will feel when he knows that he is a plaything, the result of an experiment, a nothing, kept there at the Emperor's pleasure?"

"It is difficult to know what the result might be with a nature like von Hartweg's," answered Eitel slowly. "At present, he is devoted to the Emperor and the Crown Prince . . ."

"As devoted as his egotistical nature will let him be," corrected Schmidt. "Up to now, he has had all he wanted. He has never been thwarted; once let him be crossed in any way and realise that he has been simply a tool in the Emperor's hand, and we would soon hear another story."

"Yes, but how to bring it about? You can be sure, until it suits his purpose, the Emperor will let von Hartweg continue in his fools' paradise; with an ordinary man, the matter would be simple enough. But with one of Werner's experiments it is different!"

"That is true, your Highness," answered Schmidt, "but, as they are nothing but animals, after all, all the lowest passions must be latent within them; and it is that fact we must work on."

"Judging from the reputation von Hartweg has in Berlin," interposed Brunn, "the beast must be very strongly developed in him; he is famous for his heartless infidelities. Do you remember the Austrian dancer, Emmy Kürt, who

was found dead in her room at the Hotel Kaizerhof last year? Rumour says that she killed herself on his account; and then there was the little Countess von Dazure who disappeared so suddenly from Berlin society some two years ago. Nobody knows what became of her; some say she entered a convent and took the vows, but her name was coupled with von Hartweg's; and there are many others. Then everyone knows he was the leading spirit in the orgies which took place at the Crown Prince's hunting-lodge last Autumn in Silesia. If you remember, the papers got hold of the story, and the police had all the trouble in the world to make them suppress names and facts; in short, von Hartweg is known to be one of the most vicious men in Berlin."

"Yes, yes, I know all that," said Eitel impatiently; "but it does not help us much at the present moment. What we must aim at now is to turn this Hartweg's allegiance from my Brother, the Emperor, and the Crown Prince. If it were possible . . ." He stopped for a moment, reflecting; then continued: "If it were possible to make him master of all the others, with his intelligence and character, he could probably arouse the beasts, and make them, with him at their head, capable of any action."

"Your Highness knows, I suppose, that the Emperor contemplates a *coup* against England during the coming year?" asked Brunn.

"Yes, I know," answered the Prince; "but it will want a lot to arouse the people again for another war. The last one, though twenty years ago, is still fresh in their memories."

Here von Ploetz, who had been listening silently but attentively to the conversation, bent forward.

"Does your Highness also know," he asked, speaking slowly and impressively, "that the tunnel has been completed?"

The Prince started.

"What, the tunnel to England?" he whispered.

Von Ploetz nodded. "Yes, the tunnel to England."

A wave of excitement swept through the room.

"Are you quite sure of your statement?" asked the Prince, eyeing him closely.

Von Ploetz looked with conscious superiority at his companions, a faint smile curling his lips.

"I went to England by way of the new *Metro* last week," he said simply. And his smile broadened as he watched the effect on his listeners. They looked at each other dumbfounded, incapable of uttering a word.

Then Brunn rose to his feet, and facing, as it were, some invisible Deity, saluted.

"Deutschland! Deutschland über alles!" he said, as though to himself.

"Deutschland! Deutschland *unter* alles!" is a more apt expression, my dear Brunn," said Schmidt sarcastically. "Old England *has* a surprise in store for her."

"Yes, a greater surprise than even *you* can imagine," continued von Ploetz. "In the vaults which exist at given intervals along the tunnel, there are stored enough explosives to blow up England from Dover to London. I believe the project is to mine the greater part of the country from the coast inland. And, according to General Estermann's calculations, the mine can be fired from the tunnel. This may naturally entail a certain loss of life, and I think this is where von Hartweg and some hundreds of Werner's experiments will come in. Men are not willing now to sacrifice their lives as they were at the time of the great War,

and the Emperor is not popular; so it will be necessary to find someone who is sure, and who will lead others blindly, probably to death, and where will such men be found?"

"Von Hartweg and the rest of Werner's creatures, of course," said Brunn excitedly.

"Exactly, gentlemen. I begin to see our way," said Eitel, rising to his feet; "and I promise you that if success crown our plans you shall not be forgotten. Meanwhile, Schmidt, go to Leipzig and find as many as you can of these creatures. Try to get into conversation with them, and in a general way find out as much as you can with the agents you have available. Do your best to begin to sow the seeds of discontent among them. But be careful; for, remember, one clumsy stroke and we shall fail! On the other hand, if we play carefully, the game is ours! . . . and then," he paused, and the three men rose to their feet saluting:

"Hoch, der Kaiser Eitel the First!" they said solemnly.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"ELSA, I want to know if it is true?"

"If what is true?" asked Elsa, looking up at Arnould in surprise. They were walking together in the garden of the Royal Palace at Potsdam, and, after a silence which had lasted a few minutes, von Hartweg had suddenly burst out with the question.

"*What* is true?" she asked again.

"That you are going to marry Hans," he said.

Elsa smiled.

"It is the first *I* have heard about it," she said quietly, and from her tone no one would have guessed how fast her heart was beating. Was he going to speak at last? "But if I were, I don't quite see how it can concern you, Captain von Hartweg?"

He stopped and looked at her.

"It concerns me to this point: you are mine, and no one else, either husband or lover, shall ever possess you!" His voice was perfectly even, but his eyes, as they met hers, were dark with passion.

"And by what right do you speak to me like this?" she asked in a low tone, her eyes flashing scornfully into his. "Have you forgotten that day in the Harz, when I gave myself to you with all the confidence and love of a young girl; and you left me there, alone, telling me, after I had given you the greatest proof a woman can give a man of her love, that I had better marry Hans. Do you remember,

Arnauld von Hartweg? Do you remember, or is your memory so short?"

Most men would have shrunk from the scorn and outraged pride that flashed from those blue eyes, but Arnauld was not like other men; he had never known what it was to feel a qualm of shame or remorse for any action he had ever committed. Werner had so far succeeded, that the moral sense was non-existent in the men his science had produced.

Arnauld in this respect was no exception to the others; in fact, Elsa's attitude was to him merely a girl's rather hysterical outburst, prompted probably by a feminine love of making a scene. He had come up against that before, and it had always struck him as childish and ridiculous; and generally resulted in him casting aside the author of the scene with as much indifference as he would throw away any object that had ceased to interest him.

But, with Elsa, it was different. He had no intention of letting her go; she was the most desirable woman in Berlin. And she had been his, and others had dared to cast their eyes on her. At this thought, all the most primitive animal instincts which lay under his worldly veneer came to the fore and his eyes flashed like steel as he answered her.

"No," he said, "I have not forgotten anything; but I intend that you shall be mine again, and not Hans, or anyone else, shall come between us."

Elsa turned pale; this was not what she had expected. Although only a girl in years, she was already woman enough to know that this was not the voice of love that was speaking, but crude animal passion. It seemed as if a mask had fallen for a moment from Arnauld's handsome face, and what she saw terrified her. As he came nearer, she threw out her hands to keep him away, her whole being for the moment filled with repulsion.

"No, no!" she cried. "Don't touch me! I hate you, oh, how I hate you!" And again she tried to push him away, but his arms closed around her like a vice, and he held her to him with almost brutal force and laughed in her face.

"You lie, and you know you lie!" he said. "You love me; but even if you hate me, it would still be the same. You *shall* be mine, even," he added, "if I have to make you my wife."

She looked up at him for a moment in astonishment; then the pain in her heart, and the desire to pierce through his steel cuirass and wound him even as he had wounded her, made her expression change to scorn.

"Your wife," she echoed ironically, "what an honour! Do you know," she added, with deliberate intention, "I would prefer to be any man's mistress than your wife!"

The next moment she regretted her words, for his face became livid with fury, and she shrank away with the impression that he was going to strike her; then his arms relaxed and he laughed again.

"What your preferences may be are no concern of mine," he said insolently, "and do not in any way change my intentions. So you may as well make up your mind to the inevitable." Then, without casting another glance at her, he turned on his heel and walked quickly away.

Elsa stood there looking after him, and so strange is the psychology of woman, that, insulted and wounded as she was, she loved him more at that moment than she ever had before. And, through all, a wave of exultation swept her whole being. For had he not said he meant to make her his wife?

A smile crossed her lips at the thought. Of course, she would continue to refuse for a little while longer, even

pretend to flirt with others to hurt him. But afterwards, the surrender would be all the sweeter. And once his wife! . . . At this point, her reverie was broken by a light touch on her arm. Turning round, she found the Crown Prince beside her.

"Fräulein Siebert, I have been searching for you everywhere. I have not been able to speak to you for a week, and now I find you standing alone in this corner of the garden, dreaming. May I know who, or what, was the subject of your dreams?"

Elsa laughed, as she swept him a profound curtsy. "Not now," she answered, looking up at him, "but perhaps later I will tell you, though I scarcely think my dreams would interest your Highness."

The little arbour in which Elsa was standing was well hidden from prying eyes, and the knowledge of this made the young Prince courageous.

"Anything that touches you is of interest to me," he said, taking her hand, and gazing adoringly into her face. "Elsa, you *must* know that I love you? No," as she raised her hand protestingly, "let me speak just for a few moments; let me forget all, and dream that I am free, free to tell the woman I love all that is in my heart! Since the first time I saw you—that night in the ballroom, do you remember?—I have loved you with all my heart, with all my soul! Elsa, Elsa, I know I have no right to speak to you like this. But you must have known, you must have felt, what I am telling you?"

There was no doubting the sincerity of his words. Elsa listened almost as in a dream. She knew it was wrong, wrong from beginning to end; but these pleading tones, after Arnould's brutality, sounded like music to her wounded heart. And, in spite of everything, she could not refrain

from feeling flattered at having captured the future Emperor's heart; for, although Germany had become a great deal more democratic in the last twenty years, Royalty was still a fetish to be bowed down to.

So, instead of indignantly repulsing the young Prince, she drew her hand gently away from his, and said quietly:

"Your Highness, I cannot, I dare not listen to you. If you continue to speak like that, it is wrong; you know as well as I do that the word love can never be spoken between us."

The Prince passed his hands across his eyes with a gesture of weariness.

"Oh, I know only too well what you say is true; but I love you so, and just to be able for a few minutes to stand with you, here, as man and woman, to be able to tell you that I love you, ah, you don't know what it means! A few minutes' respite from the eternal prison of royalty, a few minutes' respite to *live* as a man, not to flit about a prepared stage as an everlasting puppet, who can only move when my father, or diplomatic interest, pulls the strings. Elsa," he threw out his arms appealingly, "even though it be wrong, even if you can't return my love, won't you let me *live* for just a few minutes?"

Elsa looked at him in astonishment. She had never heard him speak like this before, never guessed how irksome the duties and obligations of royalty were proving to this handsome, weak-faced boy; and a feeling of intense pity filled her heart. As he finished speaking, his arms dropped heavily to his sides, and he sank down on a bench, his head buried in his hands; she timidly placed her hand on his fair head.

"It is madness for you to speak like this," she said softly, "and I cannot love you as you wish, although if I could it

would only mean hopeless misery and suffering for us both. We are too far apart."

At her touch, he had raised his head, catching her hand in his, and pressing passionate kisses on it. She tried to withdraw it, but he held it fast, drawing her down beside him on the bench.

"And if I were not the Crown Prince, Elsa? Suppose I were not, would you love me then?"

He bent forward eagerly, his eyes holding hers with passionate entreaty. She looked into the handsome face so close to hers; how different this boy's impetuous love-making was to Arnauld's crude and almost brutal words! Why couldn't Arnauld speak to her like this? Why couldn't he look into her eyes, as this boy was doing, instead of looking at her with that cold, insolent look of proprietorship, as though she were nothing but his slave?

At this moment all the anger rose in her anew. Oh, she would make him suffer for what he had said, suffer until he knelt at her feet imploring her forgiveness! And here before her was the instrument for making him suffer; and, because his rival was the Prince, he would be powerless!

"Elsa, answer me!" The boy's voice was insistent, as he bent still nearer. "If I were *not* the Crown Prince?"

For a moment she hesitated. Did some vague presentiment as to the far-reaching consequences of her answer flash across her mind? Did some voice whisper that, at that moment, Fate was weighing the destiny of a Nation, and that her words, the words of a girl, would turn the scales? Who knows?

She closed her eyes, and a slight shudder went through her as she felt the Prince's breath on her cheek.

"If you were *not* the Prince," she murmured, "I might. . . ." But the rest of her answer was lost, as she yielded

her lips to his. Then, tearing herself from his embrace, she ran out of the arbour.

The future Emperor of Germany rose to his feet. He made no attempt to follow her, but stood there for a moment with a smile of satisfaction on his face.

"There is more than one way of winning a woman," he said, as, lighting a cigarette, he strolled out into the garden. Quite obviously, His Highness the Crown Prince Frederick William had inherited some of his ex-Imperial grandfather's histrionic ability.

## CHAPTER IX.

A FEW minutes after the clocks in the city of Hanover had struck the hour of noon, the streets became crowded with men and women, hurrying along from the factories and workshops, some walking, some on bicycles, all bent on their mid-day meal.

Usually a cheery-enough throng, there was to-day an anxious look on most of the faces. They walked together in groups, talking eagerly, reading a pamphlet which every other man and woman seemed to possess. On a bench in the Tiergarten, where many had gone to eat in the open their lunch of sausage and bread, washed down by a bottle of beer, a group was collected around a bench listening intently to a man who was reading aloud from the pamphlet he held in his hand. The faces around him were lowering, and, as the man read, his harsh voice carried far beyond the little group around the bench, and attracted the attention of many pedestrians, who, from curiosity, drew near to listen.

"Citizens of Hanover," he read, "twenty years ago the late Kaiser Wilhelm and the Government imposed a terrible war upon you, and upon the rest of the land. Your sons, your husbands, your fathers, went in their thousands to France, Belgium, and Russia. Sacrificing their lives, thousands never returned. Do you not remember your desolate homes?—your fatherless children? Do you not remember when starvation and famine stalked through the land, the land that had once been so fair and prosperous? Do

you not remember when your children cried out for bread, and you had no bread to give them?—when your babes died because there was no milk for them? Citizens of Hanover, for twenty years this land has been at peace. But beware, there is One whose eyes are turning towards England and France, even as his father's turned in 1914! In the ears of that One, the tramp of armies marching towards the frontier is growing louder every day; and around him gather the vultures longing for the carnage of twenty years ago! Citizens of Hanover, beware, I say! The cloud of war approaches again. Remember, you are men, not slaves! Will you bend again to the will of a mad despot? Will you give your lives and ruin your homes to please that curse of our Fatherland, Prussian militarism? No, a thousand times no! There is yet time, the people have a voice; let it be heard. You have hands; let them be used against those tyrants who will take your lives and ruin your homes. Citizens, act! Act, before it is too late!"

As the man read, angry murmurs had come from the crowd, which was now considerable; and, as he finished, and threw down the pamphlet, loud cries of rage burst from their lips.

"Down with militarism!" "Death to the tyrants!" "Curse the Kaiser!" "We want peace; no more war for us!" came from all sides.

A woman who had been listening intently, with a strange smile of satisfaction and something else on her lips, now pushed her way through the crowd, and jumped on to the bench from which the man had been reading. Her appearance had the effect of immediately silencing the crowd, and every face was turned towards her in tense expectation.

"So," she said, with a short, contemptuous laugh, "the idea of another war makes you angry? It makes you so

angry that you are are brave enough to shout 'Curse the Kaiser,' and 'Down with the tyrants,' and this afternoon you will not go back to work, but will have a demonstration and shout a lot more, until your throats are dry. Then you will go to the nearest beer-garden and besot yourselves with beer, and talk of the great things you are going to do. And to-morrow you will go back to work like good subjects of the Kaiser, and feel thoroughly ashamed of yourselves! Oh, I know you, my heroic citizens! Bismarck called you sheep, and he was right. You *are* sheep, nothing else! And when the order for mobilisation is pasted up on the walls of the town, you will go like sheep and be slaughtered!"

"You lie!" cried an angry voice from the crowd. "Give us a chance, and we will soon show what we will do."

"Aye, that we will!" shouted a chorus of voices; and angry faces were turned towards the woman.

She looked back at them defiantly.

"Brave *words*," she sneered. "And what will your *deeds* be? Braver still, hein? You will overthrow the Government, perhaps? Depose the Kaiser? Establish the freedom and rights of citizenship throughout the Fatherland? Bah, you make me sick! Words, all words, and you will crumple up and collapse before the first little lieutenant who struts up with half-a-dozen men behind him to tell you to disperse."

Her words had lashed the crowd like a whip; for in their hearts they knew what she said was true, and the sting was all the greater. For the moment, all their hostility was turned towards this woman, whom no one knew, and who had dared to speak to them like this. Their faces were white and menacing as they surged around her; then a diversion was created by a man, who pushed his way

through the crowd and jumped up on the bench beside the woman, who got down and became lost in the crowd.

"Listen to me, comrades," he cried, in a clear, powerful voice. "The woman is right; it is true we *are* sheep; but even straying sheep will go in the right direction if the shepherd is good; let us, then, find a shepherd, who will lead us not to War, but to a Peace full of security. The Emperor and the Government, with their rampant militarism, can only lead us to destruction. Let us find a leader for ourselves, one who will let each man have his own individual rights of citizenship, and not treat him as a mere chattel to be sacrificed for a tyrant's whim!"

He paused for a moment, and loud cries of "Yes, he is right, let us find a leader!" and "Bravo Hans!" came from all sides.

The man was well known to most of those present. He was a fellow workman, Hans Schneider by name, a builder, whose socialistic views were very familiar to his comrades. So they were prepared to listen to him with more patience and attention than they had given to the unknown woman; but there were some among them who cast frightened and furtive glances all round, for they were listening to words which, if the police came along, would mean imprisonment and heavy punishment; then Hans began to speak again, and a silence fell on the crowd as they listened with rapt attention to his words.

"Comrades, we have read this," holding up the pamphlet. Groans came from the crowd. "It is true that the Emperor wants again to soak the Fatherland in blood! Shall we stand quietly by, and let him do it?"

Cries of "No, no! Never!" greeted this question.

"Who suffered in the great war? Was it Wilhelm? Did he ever suffer a scratch? Not he! Whilst we, the people,

were being driven like beasts to the slaughter, whilst our wives and children were starving at home, he and his officers were amusing themselves with trollops from Berlin, drinking and fêting them, whilst we were dying! Comrades, will you be his dupes again? Will you be sheep as this woman said, and go wherever this man drives you? Or, will you find a leader, one who loves the Fatherland, one who will rule wisely and well, for the peace and prosperity of his country and people?"

A great shout went up from the crowd:

"Who is this man? Let us find him, and we will follow him!"

Hans cast a quick glance over the heads of the crowd. Down the road leading to the town he saw a patrol of Uhlans trotting towards them. On the left, a group of policemen were strolling over the grass, doubtless meaning to investigate what this demonstration meant. He knew that in the present mood of his audience, if the police and soldiers came up, there would be an ugly fight. Many would be arrested, many injured, some killed perhaps, and these men and women were needed to spread the work begun to-day.

With an authoritative gesture, he held up his hand to silence the cries of the excited mob.

"Comrades, the moment is not yet ripe," he said. "But do not fear. When all is ready, your leader, the man who will save Germany, will be there! Now disperse, quickly, before these——" (with a rapid movement, he indicated the advancing soldiers and police)—"come. You know what it means if we are overheard, and then our hopes will be crushed; quick, go, before it is too late!"

As he said the last words, he sprang from the bench and

hurried away in the opposite direction, whilst the crowd, casting frightened glances in the direction of the soldiers, broke up into small groups and began to stroll away just as the policemen came up.

"What was it all about?" asked a burly inspector to a young man, who was sitting, calmly filling his pipe, on the bench from which Hans had been speaking a few minutes before.

"Oh, nothing!" He shrugged his shoulders indifferently. "A Socialist, as usual."

"Ah, these Socialists," the inspector laughed; "always talking about something. We should have our work cut out if we paid attention to them; I suppose this has something to do with it."

And he stooped forward, and picked up a pamphlet which some one had dropped. He glanced over it. Then, turning to his companions, burst out laughing.

"Listen to this," he cried. "Another war scare, as if we hadn't had enough of war twenty years ago! Himmel, what fools! Still, I suppose we had better report the matter," and, putting the pamphlet in his pocket, he walked away, followed by his companions.

## CHAPTER X.

"AND so it succeeded?"

"Even beyond our expectations, Highness; the pamphlet did wonders, and Hans and the woman Greta obeyed our orders to the letter, catching them just at the right moment. The seeds are sown, and the people are already dreaming of the unknown ruler who will save them from another war."

"You have given orders for more papers to be distributed by our agents?"

"In every large city throughout the kingdom, our agents are placing them. Everywhere, in the factories, in the workshops, wherever the people are in numbers our agents are at work. In another month, there will not be a man or woman in Prussia who does not know that the Emperor is going to try and impose another war on the country; and at the same time our men are working beside them in the workshops and in the factories, drinking beer with them in the evening, and whispering a name in their ears—the name of a man who abhors militarism and war, the man who will be their leader."

Eitel gave a nod of satisfaction.

"Good," he said, "good! You have done well, Schmidt. But, tell me, what about von Hartweg and the others? We need them?"

"I am coming to that now, your Highness; whilst I was in Leipzig, I was fortunate enough to find one of the schools where Werner's Experiments are trained. The place is

about three miles out of the town, and it was by a sheer stroke of luck that I discovered it. I had intended to fly into Dresden to give some instructions to one of our men there, and, after having left the outskirts of the town, was flying pretty low, when I caught sight of a building, in front of which, on a large open space, a great number of men were collected and apparently engaged in some sort of military manœuvres. As I could see that they were not soldiers, my curiosity was aroused, and I brought my 'plane down in a lonely part about a mile further on; and, leaving it there, strolled back in the direction of the building.

"I found the place surrounded by a high fence of wooden stakes and barbed wire, and it was evident that it was closely guarded, for I saw men like warders, every twenty yards or so, keeping guard.

"In the square, as far as I could judge, there were about four or five hundred young men, going through a kind of mimic battle, which they seemed to enjoy hugely. They were all boys of splendid physique, very different from the men we see about in these days. This set me thinking, and I determined to find out more about them. So, instead of continuing my way to Dresden, I flew back to Leipzig, and, explaining to some of my men where the place was situated, told them to find out all they could about it. To cut a long story short, and not weary your Highness, the next day my suspicions were confirmed. The place was one of Werner's places; and the boys were brought there almost as infants, kept there, and, at the age of seventeen or eighteen, drafted into the army. The peasants around told stories of their wild doings, and how the strict guard which I had noticed was necessary, as at times they broke loose. Then, God help those who crossed their path! Nothing was sacred to them, and the only argument which could

bring them to reason was the barrel of a rifle, and afterwards the whip; so your Highness can judge from that what they will be like to deal with."

He stopped speaking, and looked for approval at Eitel, who had been listening intently, and now nodded as though well satisfied at what he heard.

"Some of those warders must be bought," he said, after a few minutes' silence. "If we are going to sow the seeds of discontent among those young beasts, some one must suggest to them what untrammelled freedom means, and paint the pleasures"—he smiled ironically—"of large cities, especially Berlin. Do you understand?"

"Yes, your Highness. I had already thought of that; but will it be wise to let this rabble loose to do as they please?"

Eitel laughed.

"Of course not. Do you think I am mad?" he said. "When the moment arrives, we shall keep them well in hand till we have them in Berlin; then, with von Hartweg at their head, to lead them, and with a full sense of their wrongs, we shall open the cage and let them free."

Schmidt stared out of the window in sudden perplexity.

"Are you so sure we can win von Hartweg over?" he asked. "He and the Crown Prince appear to be on more friendly terms than ever."

A smile crossed Eitel's face.

"Has it never occurred to you," he asked, "that the closest friendship can be broken when a woman steps in between?"

Schmidt started.

"A woman!" A look of contempt crossed his face. "Your Highness is making a great mistake if you think that von Hartweg would ever be aroused to action by a

woman! The Crown Prince, yes; but von Hartweg, never! His depravity in every form of vice is notorious, and the Crown Prince is often his companion, but he is incapable of having any strong normal feeling for a woman."

Eitel's smile deepened.

"My dear Schmidt," he said, "you are the cleverest Secret Service man in Germany; but there are still some matters in which you are an utter fool!"

## CHAPTER XI.

ARNAULD VON HARTWEG threw himself wearily into his chair. For over a fortnight now he had been on duty every day superintending the drilling of a new lot of recruits, who appeared even more stupidly brutish and stubborn than the boorish peasants he generally had to lick into shape. But one thing there was about these new men: they had a finer physique than the others which he had to deal with lately; only they all bore on their faces a dogged brutishness, which at times puzzled him.

And as he stretched himself out in his big English chair, he wondered vaguely from what provinces they had been taken. Then, as he reached across the table for a cigarette case, an idea suddenly struck him, which banished all thoughts of the new recruits. To-night there was a reception at the Bohemian Embassy, and Elsa would certainly be there. Since that day in the garden, he had not been able to have a word alone with her. She seemed to be avoiding him as much as possible, and she flirted outrageously with all the young officers. Little fool! She was trying to make him jealous, of course. He laughed aloud at the idea! Why, even the Crown Prince. . . . At the thought of Frederick William, Arnauld's expression changed.

Bah, it was ridiculous. He had had enough of this uncertainty, however. She was his, and she must not be allowed to forget it. The only unfortunate thing was that, being a ward of the Emperor, it meant marriage if he

wanted to keep her for himself. Well, marriage would be a sacrifice to him in many ways, but, after all, she was the prettiest woman in Berlin, and the most sought after. Perhaps, then, the shackles of matrimony would not be so heavy?

An hour later he was standing in the large ballroom of the Bohemian Embassy, watching the brilliant scene before him with indifferent eyes. A pretty woman passed him on the arm of a Czech attaché. She was well known in Berlin society, and he had often danced with her.

"Not dancing, Captain von Hartweg?" she said, lightly tapping him on the arm with her fan.

He bowed.

"No, I think not, Baroness. I know I have come too late to secure one from *you*, and so——" He shrugged his shoulders expressively.

The little Baroness laughed, well-pleased at the compliment his words implied.

"Never mind," she said. "The next time, if you promise to come early, I may keep one for you if you ask very nicely for it"; and, casting a coquettish glance at him, she passed on with her cavalier.

"Hallo, Arnould, what is the matter? You are looking very gloomy." A heavy hand came down on his shoulder, and, looking around, he found Hans von Messing standing beside him.

"I'm not gloomy, only bored," he answered. "It is always the same round, and I'm sick of it!" Von Messing looked at him in surprise.

"Well, I don't know what *you* have to grumble about," he said. "You have everything a man can want. Oh, by the way, have you heard the news from Leipzig?"

"No; what is it?"

Arnauld was hardly paying attention to what his companion was saying; he had just caught sight of Elsa at the other end of the room, on the arm of the Crown Prince. Von Messing drew nearer, and lowered his voice. "The Socialists have held a demonstration protesting against the present government and militarism. They were joined by the people, and it is said"—here his voice fell still lower—"that there were even hostile cries against the Emperor."

Arnauld laughed indifferently.

"The Socialists are always barking about something. And as to the people—the sight of a few rifle-barrels soon brings them to reason."

"Yes, I know, but the trouble seems graver this time. Anti-royalist demonstrations have taken place at Königsberg and Danzig."

"Ah?" indifferently. Arnauld was not listening. His eyes were fixed on Elsa and the Crown Prince. The Prince was looking down at her, and in his attitude there was a suggestion of proprietorship which sent a wave of fury through Arnauld. His hands clenched themselves, and he made a movement towards them; but etiquette prevented him from going to speak to Elsa when the Crown Prince claimed her attention; and he was well aware that even the fact of his close friendship with Frederick William could not break down the rigid etiquette of the Prussian Court; so, with an effort, he restrained himself, and tried to pay attention to what Hans was saying. Two or three other officers had now joined them, and all were eagerly discussing the news from Leipzig.

"But what is the cause of these demonstrations?" asked Brandt, a man in the Potsdam Grenadiers. "I was in Leipzig a month ago, with the Prince; and the town was as peaceful and sleepy as a Thuringen village."

“Oh, nobody knows exactly what has started the affair,” answered von Messing, “although von Arnheim told me that it was some sort of war scare.”

“War scare!” The words were echoed by his companions. Arnould laughed harshly.

“I wish to God it were true!” he said. “We do nothing but vegetate here!” A sudden wild desire to kill was on him, and the one word *War* had set his senses afire with the lust for blood.

“Hush, my boy; you don’t know what you are saying. I know what war means, and I hope to God I shall never see another!”

The speaker was a tall, grizzled man of about sixty, who had just joined the group. He wore the uniform of a General, and the many medals and decorations on his breast proved him to be a personage of high rank. The younger men all saluted respectfully.

“We were discussing the Leipzig affair, General,” said Brandt, “and von Messing here was telling us that it is a new war scare that has set the fire burning.”

An expression of contempt crossed the General’s face. “There are always busy-bodies ready to spread such reports about,” he said, “and this new order for a five years’ term of military service has caused some disquiet. But it is nothing. You will see, in a few days the whole affair will have fizzled out. Two or three arrests, and we shall hear no more about it. Good evening, gentlemen,” and, with a smile, he turned away and was soon in deep conversation with an important ambassador who had beckoned to him.

As soon as he could free himself from his companions, Arnould strolled away in the direction of a curtained-off room, where he had seen Elsa disappearing some minutes before.

As he entered, he nearly collided with a Hussar lieutenant with whom he remembered Elsa had been dancing a few minutes before. The lieutenant saluted and apologised. "I was just going to fetch Fräulein Siebert some refreshment," he explained, and hurried away. Elsa started as she saw Arnould enter the room; then turned pale as she noted the expression on his face; but with an effort she forced a smile, and held out her hand.

"Have you only just come, Arnould?" she asked nervously. "I did not know you would be here, and I am afraid my programme is full."

He took no notice of her outstretched hand, but stood looking down at her. Then, with a quick movement, he caught her in his arms, and covered her neck and shoulders with kisses, passionate kisses which bruised and marked the soft, white flesh.

"Arnould! Arnould!" she gasped. "Let me go!"

For a moment she struggled; then, under his kisses, all the true woman in her which he had awakened years ago in the forest, awoke; and stifled was every other feeling.

"Oh, my darling, my darling!" she cried, giving herself utterly to his embrace; "how I love you!" He held her close to him, his blue eyes burning with passion.

"I have had enough of this," he said hoarsely. "You flirt with every man you meet. It must stop! Do you understand? At once, to-morrow, I shall ask the Emperor for your hand."

Elsa disengaged herself from him gently.

"But suppose I say no, Arnould?" she said, with a tender smile which was very near to tears. It thrilled her to see him so moved for her sake; and she could not resist the temptation to play with him for a few minutes more.

He caught her arm roughly. "You have no choice. You——" he began. Then, suddenly, a change came over his face; the passion died away, and Elsa saw a look gradually dawn in his eyes, which had never been there before.

Arnauld relaxed his hold a little, and passed one hand over his thick hair in bewilderment. Then the truth came to him like a blinding flash.

After twenty-five years, the spirit of his dead mother had her revenge. The little seedling of love she had implanted in her unborn baby, before Werner's awful lie had killed all human feeling within her, had suddenly come to its harvest-time.

"You will not refuse me," he said tenderly. "You cannot, Elsa, now, because—*I love you!*"

## CHAPTER XII.

THAT night, Prince Eitel gave a supper-party at his lodge, a few miles out of Berlin. It was an extremely select affair. The only men invited were his nephew, the Crown Prince, and a few of his *intimes*. But Eitel's suppers were always interesting, and to-night was even more amusing than usual. The ladies were a choice selection from the most famous cabarets in Berlin, and the host had stipulated that each guest should sit down to supper clad in classical garb.

"In the present age," he had said with a cynical smile, "to save ourselves from utter decadence, it is necessary to resort to the customs of the Greeks and Romans. They were the only people who understood the true beauty of things. And above all they placed the human form divine. Ladies and gentlemen, we shall emulate them."

A burst of laughter and applause greeted this sally; and so the guests had arrived with the intention of playing all night the parts of nymphs and satyrs. Foresters were placed on guard round the lodge, to prevent the advent of any unwelcome intruder, who might be attracted by the lights and sounds of revelling. And feeling themselves quite secure, Eitel and his guests gave themselves up to the full enjoyment of the moment. Further to emulate the Greeks and Romans, wide couches took the place of chairs, and the guests were waited on by young girls dressed to represent Cupids.

The table was loaded with good things, and the inevitable *sekt* flowed like water. After supper, the table was moved

away, and then the revels became even more fast and furious. Von Ploetz gave his inimitable imitation of an amorous Tom-cat, while little Mizzi Wehlen, of the *Chat Noir Cabaret*, played the part of a coquettish "She" to perfection; and when, after a mock struggle, he captured her, the guests burst into delighted shouts, and an encore was demanded.

Then the 'Jewess, Lillie Marx, gave her famous Arabian dance, with which she delighted audiences every night at the *Germania*. Every movement of her beautiful, lithe body was calculated to excite the senses, and when at last she threw herself hot and panting into the arms of the Crown Prince, the applause knew no bounds.

"What is the matter with our Willy to-night?" she cried, addressing the others. "He is as dull as ditch-water!"

"He's in love with his fiancée," cried von Ploetz, who, still in his rôle of Tom-cat, was pretending to bite Mizzi Wehlen's neck.

"Or his head has been turned by the new Russian dancer at the Opera," volunteered Brandt, who was comfortably lying with his head reposing on his partner's shoulder.

Frederick William laughed irritably.

"What fools you all are!" he said. "Surely it is not a sign of being in love, because I'm not in the mood to make an ass of myself as you are doing?"

Eitel eyed his nephew for a moment, a sardonic smile crossing his lips.

"I will tell you a secret, ladies and gentleman," he said, looking around the company slyly. "Willy has been long-ing to pick one of the roses which adorn our Court; but, alas, he has hesitated so long that von Hartweg has stepped in, and has picked it before him. So you can well understand his lack of appreciation for our charming guests."

As Eitel finished speaking, Frederick William jumped to his feet. He had drunk too much, and he swayed unsteadily, his face crimson with anger.

"What do you mean about von Hartweg?" he shouted. "You know he does not care a damn about the Court women!"

His uncle laughed.

"Ask von Ploetz, then," he said calmly. "He was at the Bohemian Embassy to-night, and happened to light on Elsa Siebert in von Hartweg's arms. Also, he overheard von Hartweg telling her he would at once ask the Emperor's permission to their marriage. So you see, my dear nephew, the flower is practically plucked!"

A roar of laughter went round the room, but Frederick William stood like a statue, his face blazing with rage.

"It is ridiculous—von Hartweg and marriage!" he muttered to himself. "It cannot be true!"

Then his hands clenched again, as a gust of drunken fury seized him. "By God!" he cried, "he *shall* not have her! I'll kill him first!"

The guests all looked a little uncomfortable now. the storm was thoroughly aroused, but Eitel still looked at his nephew smilingly.

"The Crown Prince of Germany cannot have a vulgar quarrel with one of his officers over a woman," he said softly. "But—the Crown Prince can pluck the flower first. Then——" He stopped and shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, yes!" chorused the others. "That is the *only way*. It will be amusing to see von Hartweg's face when he finds out."

Frederick William looked from one to the other doubtfully, his fuzzled brain refusing to work clearly. He

grasped, in a hazy way, that they were advising him to do exactly what he wished. But! He sat down again, and, pulling Lillie Marx towards him, started twisting a strand of her black hair around his fingers. He was only capable of one feeling at that moment—rage and resentment towards von Hartweg.

Eitel's voice broke in on him again.

"Whatever is done, must be done quickly," he said. "Otherwise—well, you know what von Hartweg is when he takes an idea into his head. He'll be married in less than a week."

"Oh, bother Elsa Siebert!" cried Lillie Marx. "Who cares if von Hartweg *does* marry her? I am sure our Willy can find heaps of pretty girls! Here, drink this; and forget her."

And, seizing a glass of champagne, she put her arms around him, and held it to his lips.

"No doubt," sneered Eitel, "your charms are more subtle than the little Siebert's, but, forgive my saying so, a man sometimes has a fancy for something, shall we say, fresher."

The others laughed.

"For my part, I'm quite satisfied with what I've got," said von Ploetz; and he stretched himself luxuriously in his companion's arms.

Suddenly Frederick William pushed Lillie away from him, and rose unsteadily to his feet.

"I'm going," he said hoarsely. "I must get away from here."

"Going?" the others repeated. "What, at this time of night? Where? It is impossible!"

He scowled at them defiantly.

"Impossible! What do you mean? What is impossible to the Crown Prince? Can't I do as I like?"

He swayed as he spoke, and nearly fell, but Lillie Marx caught hold of him.

Eitel looked at his nephew keenly. He saw that, through all the haze of his drunkenness, some definite idea was maturing in his kinsman's mind.

"Where do you want to go?" he asked in a conciliatory tone. "It is too late, or, rather, I should say too early, to go back to Berlin now. And, besides, we have arranged to stay here all together until to-night."

Frederick William looked at him dully.

"It's *not* too early!" he said, with drunken obstinacy. "I want to go, and I'm going—to Elsa!"

Von Ploetz and Eitel exchanged glances quickly. Eitel did not want a scandal at this moment, and if he let his nephew go now, drunk as he was, there was no knowing what might happen!

He got up and walked over to Frederick William. An idea had just struck him, which, if it could be carried out, would crown his hopes with success.

"Willy," he said, taking the boy by the shoulders, "listen to reason! You can't possibly go now. But I will tell you what I will do—if you will stay here, I will bring Elsa Siebert to you this afternoon!"

"What?"

For a moment, this astounding assertion sobered Frederick William.

"Bring *Elsa* here? *Elsa Siebert*? No, no!" he relapsed again into his maudlin drunkenness, "you can't catch me like that; she wouldn't come!"

Eitel shook him impatiently.

"Listen," he said, with slow emphasis; "if I give you my

word that, by five o'clock this afternoon, Elsa Siebert will be with you here, alone, will you believe me?"

The men and women around listened with keen interest to what was going on. No one but von Ploetz realised exactly what was behind the incident; but all felt, even through their dulled senses, that something more vital than a desire to prevent his nephew from making a fool of himself by going to Berlin drunk in the small hours of the morning, was making Eitel pledge his word for the ruin of a girl who, as everybody knew, was the Emperor's ward.

Frederick William stared at him a moment. Then something he saw in his uncle's face seemed to convince him.

"All right," he said at last, twisting himself free from his uncle's grasp, and throwing himself down again beside Lillie Marx. "I'll stay, but don't forget, at five o'clock you'll bring her here—five o'clock!" he muttered drunkenly.

\* \* \* \* \*

The same morning, towards eleven o'clock, the Baroness von Brucke, Prince Eitel's mistress (some said his morганatic wife, for the liaison had outlasted all his previous affairs and seemed built on more solid ground) was sipping her chocolate when the telephone beside her rang sharply. She picked up the receiver.

"Who is there?" she asked lazily.

"It is I," answered Eitel's voice; "listen carefully, for I have not much time. Directly you are dressed, go and call on the Baroness von Rosenberg. Yes, yes, I *know* she is away. But that does not matter. Do as I tell you, and invite Elsa Siebert to drive with you this afternoon in the *Grunwald*. Don't take a refusal. Then drive to the second garden restaurant in the forest, order coffee, and wait there for me. Now do you understand?"

"Yes," the Baroness's voice reached him over the wire in shrill surprise. "But what on earth do you want with Elsa Siebert? Is it important?"

There was a moment's silence at the other end of the 'phone. Then Eitel's voice answered slowly:

"It is so important that, if all turns out well, it will mean the fulfilment of our ambitions!"

And so it came to pass that that afternoon Elsa Siebert went to drive in the forest with the Baroness.

## CHAPTER XIII.

ARNOLD's mood was stormy in the extreme. Everything had gone wrong with him. He had been to the Palace early and asked for an audience with the Emperor, and, after waiting for more than two hours, was told that his Majesty was indisposed and would not see anybody till the next day. Then, after lunch, he had called at the Baroness von Rosenberg and found that the Baroness and Hedwig were away, and that Elsa had gone out driving with the Baroness von Brucke. So, to put a curb on his impatience, he had returned home, ordered his horse to be brought round, and gone for a sharp gallop on the Kurfürstendamm. The exercise had done him good, but the fact that he had missed seeing Elsa made him still extremely ill-humoured.

When he returned home after his ride, he found von Messing waiting for him.

"You've seen the news to-day?" asked the latter eagerly, when the first greetings were over. "Anti-royalist riots are taking place everywhere. I tell you we shall have them in Berlin before we know where we are. The movement is spreading."

"Rubbish!" said Arnould curtly. "A few soldiers will easily suppress the whole thing. Such things have happened hundreds of times, and always ended in nothing."

"Yes, I know. But this time it is more serious, I tell you." Von Messing spoke impressively, and his heavy face wore an anxious and uneasy expression. "At Frankfurt, they turned the military out, but the soldiers were stoned by the people; and, when the order to fire was given, it was

found that the rioters had been supplied with firearms from somewhere, for they returned fire. In fact, the affair has become so serious that a special meeting of the Reichstag was called this morning to discuss the best means of dealing with the matter."

"If they catch a few of the leaders and shoot them down, it will soon stop. There is only one way with such rabble," and Arnould flung himself impatiently into a chair. "For God's sake sit down, my dear fellow, and don't croak so. Here, have a cigar," and he pushed a box towards him. "Oh, by the way," he added, after a moment's pause, to change the subject, "I have something to tell you: I am going to be married."

Von Messing's jaw dropped, and he looked at Arnould in speechless astonishment. "What!" he exclaimed, when he could speak. "You getting married? To whom?"

Arnould struck a match and lit his cigar.

"To your cousin, Elsa Siebert, of course," he answered quietly.

"To Elsa Siebert? Gott! Well, I don't know that I altogether envy you," said von Messing, with a grin. "She's too fond of her own damn way. Still, I bet you'll break her. You have such a sweet way of your own with women!" he added, his grin breaking into a guffaw. "Really, the idea of your marrying is too funny!"

Arnould frowned, and was about to answer when the telephone bell rang sharply. He crossed the room and picked up the receiver.

"Is that Captain von Hartweg?" asked a high-pitched voice, whether of man or woman it was difficult to tell.

"Yes," he answered. "Who is speaking?"

The person at the other end took no notice of the question, but went on in the same high-pitched voice:

"A friend thinks it is right that you should know that Fräulein Elsa Siebert is at this moment at Prince Eitel's hunting-lodge with her lover."

With an oath, Arnould dropped the receiver. Brushing the astonished von Messing aside without any explanation, he rushed to the door.

"Heinrich! Heinrich!" he shouted to his man, "go round to the Hangar at once, and get out the fastest plane. I am coming now."

He dashed back into the room, seized his sword, and, buckling it on as he went, rushed down the stairs after Heinrich.

\* \* \* \* \*

Schmidt hung up the receiver, and looked at von Ploetz.

"I fear that to-morrow we shall all be wearing crape-armlets for his Royal Highness the Crown Prince," he said, with a grim smile.

Von Ploetz shifted uneasily.

"He was lying on a couch, sleeping off the effects of last night when I left him this morning. I should think he'll only just wake up in time to be murdered. By the way, how have you managed about the girl? She's not one to go there quietly."

Schmidt laughed.

"Oh, Eitel arranged that very well. Dr. Schultz, who is one of us, you know, gave him a drug which acts at once and takes away a person's memory for five or six hours, not more. To put it into her coffee was the easiest thing in the world; and, of course, as soon as her part is over, she'll be quietly hustled back to the von Rosenbergs. When, in a few hours, the effect of the drug has worn off, she'll be none the wiser, and will not remember a thing of what has transpired."

Von Ploetz made a grimace.

"I'm rather sorry all the same for von Hartweg," he said. "By the way, who are those men who came in from Leipzig this morning? I've not seen a finer set of beasts in my life! There was an awful row when they arrived, and old Breitkopft was cursing like blazes. It seems there was some wrong order given. However, they've all been put in with those recruits von Hartweg has been training; so I suppose it will be all right?"

Schmidt grinned.

"I can't tell you anything about that matter just now; but probably you'll hear all about them to-night or to-morrow," he said in peculiar tones.

## CHAPTER XIV.

ARNAULD landed his machine on an open space in the forest about fifty yards from the shooting lodge. With an effort, he put enough curb on himself to appear perfectly calm.

When two foresters tried to bar his way, "I have an important communication for his Royal Highness," he said, in answer to their inquiries. "Let me pass!"

The two men looked at each other doubtfully. Their orders were strict; but the Prince's friendship with von Hartweg was well known. So, after a few moments' consultation, they let him go. He knew the place well, having often taken part in the orgies held there by Eitel.

Fearing that he might meet with some resistance if he went to the ordinary entrance, he made a slight *détour* and came round to the back of the lodge. Here, chance favoured him again. Someone had carelessly, or carefully, left a window open, and in a moment Arnauld had climbed over the sill and was in the house. Then he began to creep softly towards the room where he knew he would find those whom he sought. If his brain had not been so absorbed in his object, it would have struck him as strange that the lodge was apparently empty, and that no one came to question his being there. Anyone seeing him at that moment would scarcely have recognised the handsome Arnauld von Hartweg in the fiendish-looking man who stood listening at the door of the Prince's apartment. His lips were drawn back over the strong white teeth, giving him the appearance of a snarling beast waiting to leap upon its prey. Then, as the sound of a laugh came to his ears, he muttered an imprecation, and, flinging open the door, strode into the room.

Frederick William was standing by a couch with a glass of champagne in his hand, looking down in drunken amusement at Elsa, who, with a half-dazed, half-frightened expression, was trying to arrange her hair, all hanging loose over her bare shoulders.

On the table, two or three empty bottles of champagne and some glasses showed that Eitel had provided everything necessary to keep his nephew in a state of intoxication.

At the sound of the door being opened, Frederick William staggered round with an oath.

"Who the devil——" he began. Then, at the sight of von Hartweg, he broke into a drunken chuckle.

"Why, it's dear old Arnauld!" he cried. "Come to fetch Elsa, have you? I don't think she'll leave me now, though—not yet, anyway."

And he chuckled again. Elsa had risen to her feet, and was gazing at Arnauld in a vague, uncomprehending way. It was clear that at the moment she did not recognise any one; but Arnauld was much too blinded by fury to notice this.

In two strides, he was across the room. The wave of madness, which had come upon him so violently once or twice before in his life, seized him now, and the red lust for blood was upon him. At the sight of his face, Frederick William uttered a cry, and, seizing his sword which lay on the table, shrank back against the wall.

"Arnauld," he cried, half-sobered, "what is the matter? What has happened? How dare you come in here like this? Ah, you devil!" as he caught sight of a pistol in von Hartweg's hand; "you want to kill me, do you?" and he made a furious lunge at Arnauld.

His sword gashed Arnauld's wrist, and he dropped the pistol. But the next moment he had the Crown Prince by

the throat. The two men swayed backwards and forwards, Frederick William vainly struggling to defend himself. At any ordinary time, he would have been no match for von Hartweg; but in his half-drunken state, he was like a child in his hands.

"Arnauld!" he gasped, "you are killing me! Don't you remember I am your friend?"

Then the expression on his face changed; he had heard steps in the passage, and, with a last desperate effort, he managed to twist himself away from von Hartweg.

"Help!" he cried. "Help! help!"

But the words died on his lips in a gasp of terror, for Arnauld, seizing one of the champagne bottles, lifted it high above his head. Then he brought it with a sickening crash down on his victim's face.

The Crown Prince fell like a log, completely stunned by the blow, with the blood pouring down his face from the injuries inflicted by the broken glass. A scream rang through the room. It came from Elsa, who, during the struggle, had remained cowering in a corner. She now rushed like a mad woman from the room. But Arnauld took no notice. It is doubtful if he saw her go. Seizing the sword which his opponent had dropped during the struggle, he passed it several times through the insensible body of the man at his feet. Suddenly, his arms were seized from behind, and the sword wrested from him. With an oath, he struggled to free himself, but the grasp of the two foresters who held him was like iron, and he remained powerless.

"Captain von Hartweg, what is the meaning of this disturbance? Good God! The Crown Prince! What has happened?" and Eitel, who had entered the room at the moment when Arnauld had brought the champagne bottle

crashing down on the Crown Prince's face, knelt down, his eyes filled with well-simulated horror, beside the lifeless body of his nephew. Arnould looked down at him. The madness had passed, and he was feeling dazed.

"I have killed him," he said shortly. "You can do what you will with me. I shall not try to escape."

Eitel rose slowly to his feet. He had satisfied himself that no life remained in the body.

"This is a terrible affair, Captain von Hartweg," he said, looking keenly at Arnould, "but we must do our utmost to prevent it leaking out how the Prince has met his death."

He turned to the two foresters.

"Take his Highness's body up to one of the sleeping rooms, and cover it over," he said. "Then return here, and remove all traces of what has happened. Now, Captain von Hartweg, you must come with me, and explain this tragic affair. We must see what can be done; but first, you must give me your word that you will not attempt to escape."

Arnould shrugged his shoulders.

"I told you to do what you liked with me. I killed him like a dog, as he deserved. There is nothing more to be said."

The cold, callous tone in which he spoke made even Eitel shudder.

All had turned out exactly as he had wished; but there was something uncanny, almost terrifying, in this man's attitude!

But there was work to do; more victims to be sacrificed before the Crown would be in his grasp.

"Come with me," the Prince said abruptly, turning towards the door. "We must come to some decision at once as to how we are to act."

## CHAPTER XV.

It was nearly midnight when Arnauld returned to Berlin. After leaving his 'plane at the Hangar, he turned his steps towards the Frederickstrasse, where the elder von Hartweg (now a man of nearly sixty years of age) still had his flat. When he arrived, a rather startled man-servant opened the door, ready to expostulate with such a late caller, but, when he recognised Arnauld, his face cleared.

Yes, he said, the master was in his study; he had only come in a few minutes before.

Arnauld strode past the man, and, without knocking, opened the study door. The elder von Hartweg was seated at the table, reading a letter, and he jumped to his feet with an exclamation of surprise as Arnauld entered.

"Why, what is it?" he exclaimed. "Quick, tell me. What is the matter?"

Arnauld came and stood before him. His face was like a mask; but in his eyes there was a look which made the other shrink.

"You will know soon enough what has happened," he said in a colourless voice; "what I have come here for now is to know if this is true."

And he flung down a paper on the table. The elder man picked it up mechanically. Then, as he read the first lines, he started and turned livid.

"Good God! How did *you* come by this?"

Arnauld took no notice of the question.

"Answer me," he said, between his clenched teeth; "is it true?"

The man whom he had always considered as his father glanced at him fearfully; what he read in those terrible eyes warned him that to lie was useless. He bowed his head, and the paper fell from his trembling fingers.

"Yes," he said in a voice scarcely above a whisper. "God help you; it *is* true."

Arnauld broke into a loud rasping laugh.

"And so I am nothing but an Experiment, am I?—the result of that devil's compact yonder, a Thing without soul, an amusement for the Emperor, to be sacrificed when the whim took him, of no more importance than one of his cattle. What am I saying? Cattle! Why, much less, I am merely the result of the scientific researches of Professor Werner."

And again he burst into the dreadful, mirthless laughter which sounded insane in von Hartweg's ears.

"Arnauld," he said, looking at him sadly, "I don't know how you have come by this paper; but, surely, even knowing the truth, you have nothing to complain of? You have always had all you wanted; nothing has ever been denied you. In the whole of Berlin, there is not one man who does not envy you."

An ugly look of contempt crossed Arnauld's face.

"Oh, yes, I know that your accomplices and yourself have not spared anything to train me as a leader of men. It was your aim to make me an influential man, a man who could lead others to be massacred, when the moment came. And, by Heaven!" he continued, his eyes flashing, "you shall not be disappointed! I will lead your Experiments to such a massacre that even you and your accomplices will be satisfied! Only it will not be against England and France. Ah, no! You shall see how perfectly we have fulfilled your idea."

And he laughed again, and turned towards the door; but the elder man caught him by the arm and held him.

"Arnauld, what are you going to do? Are you mad? Remember that the Emperor is your Master! God Himself will curse you if you lift your hand against him!"

"God!"

Arnauld swung around, and faced the man he had believed to be his father.

"Is it *you* who speak to me of God?—you, who have always taught me there was no God! And now you dare to tell me *that* God will curse me! Which God, I should like to know? Whose God—yours, the Emperor's?"

Wrenching his arm free, he again strode towards the door. Then he stopped and looked back at the trembling man, his eyes blazing with hatred.

"You had better pray to your God now, the Devil, if you want to save your skin. For, remember, Werner's Experiments have no pity!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Earlier in the evening, Schmidt had received a letter which was brought to him by a forester in the Royal livery. It contained only these words:—"The fuse is lighted; act at once." A smile of satisfaction crossed his face, as he tore the letter into minute fragments. Then he picked up the telephone. . . .

## CHAPTER XVI.

COLONEL VON BRETTREICH was just finishing his breakfast with some brother officers at Charlottenburg when an orderly burst into the room. The Colonel glared at him.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded. "Have you taken leave of your senses?"

The man saluted. He was visibly under the stress of some great excitement.

"Herr Colonel, this dispatch has just arrived from Headquarters."

The Colonel, with a curse, tore open the paper. As he read, his face became purple.

"Lieber Gott!" he cried, jumping to his feet. "Berlin is in revolution! Turn out the men at once. The police can do nothing. Where is von Hartweg? He must go at once with those new recruits. It is better to have them shot down by the people than any of our picked men. Send some of the Austrians, too!" and he waddled out of the room, followed by the others.

On the large, open square before the barracks were drawn up line after line of broad-shouldered young giants, very different from the weaklings which formed the bulk of the German army of the moment.

As the General and his staff approached, Arnauld rode up and dismounted.

"Ah, Captain von Hartweg," the General cried, going up to him. "You have heard the news? Take a Company, of these men, at once, to Berlin; and, if necessary, give those

swine a taste of cold steel. It seems the police can't cope with the matter, so don't hesitate to go to extreme measures."

Arnauld saluted.

"Don't fear, General," he said, with an enigmatical smile. "I shall not hesitate in the least. I shall not stop at anything!"

Then, vaulting into his saddle again, he rode up to the first line of recruits.

"My men," his voice rang out over the barrack-square. "Berlin has followed the example of Frankfurt, Munich, Leipzig, and many other cities, and the people are in revolt. I have just received orders to lead you there, and, regardless of life, stop the riots. But, do you know why these people have revolted? They would make a revolution because the Emperor wishes to make another war!"

At the word war, exclamations of delight went through all the ranks, but the General began to twist his moustache uneasily.

"What the devil is von Hartweg doing?" he muttered to himself. "It is not necessary to give an exhortation to men who are going to quell a handful of rioters! Here, Major, go and tell him to lead them out at once!"

Arnauld continued.

"Ah, that pleases you—a war? But do you know what it means? There will be no freedom; you will simply go and be shot down to please the Emperor, and if you refuse you will still be shot. It means death any way." (Groans greeted this.) "Now, why should young men like yourselves kill others, and be killed, to please one man, and one class such as these?"

He pointed to the General, who, with eyes nearly starting out of his head, and purple in the face, was listening, too paralysed for the moment to say a word.

"Is it not better," he went on, "to kill to please *yourselves*?"

An excited murmur of assent went through the ranks.

"Yes? Then, my men, if you think as I do, I will lead you to Berlin; and we will join the people, who are revolting against this tyranny; and we will help to wipe out, once and for all, this militarism, beginning with the chief tyrant himself. And you will be free—free to do what you will! Come, my men. To Berlin!"

Loud cheers broke out.

"Down with the tyrants—let us be free!"

The ranks broke, and the men crowded round Arnauld.

"Arrest that lunatic!" yelled the General. "The men will be out of hand in a moment."

He strode forward, followed by his Staff and some of the Austrian Guard.

"Captain von Hartweg," he bellowed, "if you do not surrender at once, I shall order my guards to fire on you and these mutineers!"

Arnauld laughed.

"I should not advise you to do that, General," he answered, "because the odds are so overwhelming against you. Much better join us?"

The General was almost speechless with fury.

"Join you, you hound!" he spluttered. Then, drawing his revolver, he fired point-blank at Arnauld; but, in his rage, his hand shook, and the bullet only grazed Arnauld's cheek, and passed harmlessly by. But the effect on the recruits was magical. It seemed as if it had only wanted the sight of a few drops of blood to awaken all the Beast in them, for, before the General or his Staff could attempt to defend themselves, with a demoniacal yell, they had

thrown themselves upon the unfortunate men, running them through and through with their bayonets.

The Austrian guards fled, and the mutineers, intoxicated by their first taste of blood, rushed headlong out of the barrack-square, waving their blood-stained bayonets in the air, and shouting:—

“Freedom! Freedom! To Berlin!”

Arnauld watched them with a smile of satisfaction on his face.

“They will go without a leader,” he said to himself, and, without casting another glance at the bodies lying on the ground, he rode quickly out of the barrack-square and followed them.

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE Emperor paced up and down the room impatiently. Since the morning, when a breathless messenger had brought the news that the city was in revolt, he had done nothing but give orders, sign decrees, and listen to the outpourings of Ministers and Generals, who seemed to have lost their heads completely. At eleven o'clock that morning he had ordered martial law to be proclaimed throughout the city. Barricades were put up in the streets, and machine-guns were turned ruthlessly against the people. All to no avail. The wave of revolution was sweeping over everything. He went to the window and listened. There was the sound of firing from every quarter, mingled with shouts and yells from different parts of the city. Flames were shooting skywards, showing that the revolutionists were sparing neither life nor property.

The Emperor's fingers twitched nervously, and his forehead was covered with beads of perspiration. If the soldiers could not stop things, the Palace would be the next place the mob would rush for. And then there would be only one thing left—flight. Yes, flight; but where to fly to? All the large cities were in revolt, and he knew only too well that what was happening to-day in the towns, would spread within a few days to the remotest village in the Empire.

Suddenly, the shouting grew louder, and a large crowd of people came surging into sight. Their cries reached the craven man, half-crouching by the window.

"Down with militarism! No more war for us! Death to the Hohenzollerns!"

At the last words, he shrank back as though he had been struck, and staggered away from the window.

Ah, the swine, so they were not satisfied yet? They would murder him, too? He stood leaning against the table, his face distorted with terror. There was only flight, but how? Where? All at once, there was a terrible explosion, followed by a loud crash.

The Emperor gave a terrified gasp, as the door was flung open and Breitkopft, followed by a crowd of officers, rushed into the room.

"The people have broken into the aviation camp at Potsdam, and, under the leadership of some devil, have flown with a squadron over the city," said one. "They seem to have got bombs, too, for one has just fallen on the left wing. Ah, again! You hear?" as another explosion came, quickly followed by others, the concussion hurling broken pieces of glass in all directions.

"But the soldiers," August William cried, "why don't they stop them? Is there not one among you who is capable of leading a troop to quell this *canaille*?"

"Your Majesty," answered Breitkopft sadly, "the 92nd regiment and the 125th joined the people this morning. I ordered the Guards out an hour ago, and they refused to fire against the people. I threatened them with every conceivable punishment, all to no avail. Now every soldier in the Palace has deserted. We remain, alone, out of-----"

He broke off, and fell violently against a chair, as, with an ear-splitting detonation, a bomb fell, seemingly in the next room, filling the air with smoke and *débris*. Pieces of flying glass struck the Emperor on the forehead, and the

blood streamed down his cheek, half-blinding him. With a cry of terror, he dashed towards the door.

"Is there not *one* of you who will curb these fiends?" he yelled. Then he stopped with a cry of joy, as the sound of heavy steps was heard, and a man, followed by a number of soldiers, entered the room.

"Ah, von Hartweg. Thank God you have come!"

"Yes, I have come."

Arnauld stood before him with drawn sword.

"Do you know who these men are?" pointing to the soldiers. "No, you don't recognise them, but I will not leave you in doubt. Look at them well, your Majesty, for they are the result of your father's and brother's compact with Werner. Ah! You remember now?"

The Emperor shrank back.

"Breitkopft! von Adelburg! Brumsen!" he cried. "This man is mad; arrest him at once!"

The officers made a step forward.

"Seize those men," cried Arnauld, "and take them away. I have no quarrel with them."

As Arnauld's voice rang out in command, Breitkopft and the others immediately found themselves in the grasp of some of von Hartweg's giant companions, and marched out of the room.

"And now, your Majesty," he said, "your friends having gone, you and I will settle our accounts together."

The Emperor sank into a chair.

"I don't understand," he muttered feebly. "I have always treated you like a son, von Hartweg. Why have you, amongst them all, turned against me at this moment?"

Arnauld looked at him with contempt.

"Look at *these men*! Look at *me*, if you want an answer.

We who were to be your Things, Creatures without soul, without feeling. Ah, your ideal has been realised beyond your wildest dreams. Do you hear those cries and shrieks? Do you hear that crowd even now entering the Palace? Those are the creatures you and Werner brought into the world, and which I have let loose on the city. You have taught them to be without pity. What do you suppose they will do when they find you here?"

The Emperor cowered still farther back in his chair.

"Von Hartweg!" he gasped, "save me; for pity's sake, save me! I swear I had no hand in this business with Werner, it was my father and the Crown Prince. I swear it. Before God, I swear it!"

He looked round helplessly, as though seeking some invisible aid to convince this iron-faced man before him. His eye fell on an exquisite ivory-and-silver crucifix, which he had pillaged from a church in France during the Great War. He sprang up and seized it.

"I swear upon this," he panted, "that I had nothing to do with it! Save me, von Hartweg; save me!"

Arnauld snatched the crucifix from him with a harsh laugh, and flung it to the other end of the room, where it struck against the wall and was shattered into a thousand fragments.

"What do we care for your Cross or your God? These men, *by your own command*, have never heard of either! Have you forgotten the words of the contract with Werner? Accursed hypocrite and liar that you are!"

A growl came from the men standing round.

"Let us have done with him!" they muttered. "We have wasted enough time here."

The Emperor sank on his knees, whimpering with terror.

"Von Hartweg," he begged, "save me from them! Ah!"

he shrieked as, at a sign from Arnould, two of the men laid hold of him and dragged him to his feet.

"Bind him," said Arnould briefly, and they strapped him up with their leather belts. "Now lay him down on that sofa."

At **that** moment, a woman burst into the room.

"Leave him to me!" she cried. "It is my right!"

Arnould looked at her sternly.

"What do you want here, woman?" he asked. "This is *our* moment; no one has a right to interfere with our vengeance."

The woman laughed wildly.

"I have the right of vengeance, even before you, for I was one of his father's victims. To bring such another as you into the world I lost love, honour, and all that a woman holds most dear. Send these men away, and let you and I settle our accounts with him."

Arnould looked at her keenly. There was something in her face which swept all doubt aside. He turned to the men.

"Leave the room," he commanded. "This woman and I will finish this matter."

The men needed no second bidding. For them, the chief interest lay in the streets. In a moment, the room was empty except for Arnould and the woman.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

WITH a feline movement, the woman crossed to where the bound man was lying, and looked down at him for a moment in silence. His eyes looked up into hers with an expression almost bereft of reason, and his lips moved, trying vainly to articulate. Terror choked all utterance. The woman smiled.

"Our vengeance has been long in coming, Hans," she said, as though addressing some invisible presence, "but it is none the less sweet because we have waited!"

As she spoke, a sheet of fire flashed up outside the windows, and the room was illuminated by the fantastic light of the flames. Arnauld caught her roughly by the arm.

"Be quick, and have finished," he said. "In a few minutes, this wing of the Palace will be burning, and it will be impossible to get out."

The woman looked at him scornfully.

"What do I care?" she said. "Save your skin if you wish. This is *my* hour, and you shall not rob me of it. Here, give me your sword for a moment. Then go if you like."

Arnauld handed her the weapon mechanically; it seemed as though he had lost all interest in the scene before him. The heat was intolerable, and the crackling of the flames came nearer and nearer.

The woman bent and spat in the face of the man lying before her. But he did not move. Terror had rendered him unconscious.

"A swine dies the death of a swine," she said, between

her teeth. Then, with a swift gesture, she drew the blade across his jugular vein. She turned to Arnould.

"My work is done," she said shortly. "Now we can go."

As they went out, little tongues of flame began to creep across the room. A few minutes later, the Emperor returned to consciousness.

At first he could not remember what had happened. His thoughts were not clear. A drowsiness was creeping over him, and his limbs felt numb. They had removed the gag. Perhaps, if he shouted, some one would hear, some one still faithful to him, and come to release him from his bonds, and help him to escape?

He called out, but the drumming in his ears made his voice sound far away and weak. He made an effort to lift himself into a sitting position, but the weight of iron bars seemed laid across him.

He sank back again with a curse. As he did so, he caught sight of a dark pool on the floor. Its appearance fascinated him. Where did it come from? He remembered once before having seen such a pool as that . . . where was it? Ah, he remembered—the Belgian girl near Liège. They had shot her just outside the room he had been dining in, and he had had to step over that dark mark as he left the house. And the girl lay on her side, her chemise all red with blood. Blood! . . . He could smell it now. It seemed everywhere. Even before his eyes a blood-red mist was gathering. He tried again to call. Ah, the swine, to let their Emperor die like this!

Who was that now standing before him? It looked like that cursed Belgian girl. But it could not be! She was dead—dead twenty years ago! But if she was dead, why was she here now? And she was not alone. Those children around her, who had let them enter? They, too, were all

covered with blood! Now they were coming nearer and nearer. In another moment, they would touch him! With a dreadful shriek, he tried to get away, struggling with his bonds; but all to no avail . . . the spectres came nearer, and still nearer, stretching out their bleeding, mutilated arms to touch him.

Then, as he made one final effort to free himself, the red mist rose and overwhelmed him . . . all was still, save for the crackling of the flames that were slowly creeping across the room towards him.

## CHAPTER XIX.

As Arnauld emerged from the gates of the Palace, he seemed to have stepped into an inferno. The street was crowded with men and women shouting and yelling, their cries mingling with the screams of any unhappy victim who tried to bar their way. The word war seemed to have transfigured the peaceful citizens into wild beasts hunting for their prey; bodies lying in pools of blood obstructed the streets. And the flames which shot up from the burning Palace threw a lurid and unnatural glare over everything. They were clamouring for the Emperor, and many had already entered the Palace and were searching for him, giving short shrift to any they met.

Already they were throwing the furniture and priceless works of art into the courtyard, and those below piled them up in a huge bonfire. The heat from the flames was intolerable, but the crowd seemed heedless of the fact; they stood with their eyes fixed on the windows, watching for what those within were searching for.

Suddenly a great shout went up, and Arnauld turned to see what had happened: the flames lit up the scene, and clearly outlined the figures at one of the windows. Two men were holding an inanimate form in their arms. Then, lifting it above their heads, they flung it down to the crowd. There was a moment's silence, and then another and greater shout went up as the body was placed on the blazing fire. And the flames shot up again still more fiercely on the Emperor's funeral pyre!

A man pushed past Arnould, and rushed into the midst of the crowd.

"The Tyrants are dead! Long live Prince Eitel, who will give us peace!"

"Peace! peace" The crowd took up the cry, and it followed Arnould as he turned away and hurried towards the Baroness von Rosenberg's house. Every street was crowded with the revolutionaries, and Arnould saw Werner's Experiments everywhere, leading the mob on to more daring and terrible deeds.

On the steps of a church, half-a-dozen of them were toasting the crowd in the silver communion vessels they had looted from the sacristy. A priest tried to remonstrate with one of them, but the man laughed and shot him dead; then kicked his body down the steps.

For a moment, Arnould watched the scene, then he sped on; he must know what had become of Elsa. As he approached his destination, the crowd became denser, and he had to force his way through. The front door of the house was wide open, and he could hear from the shouting that the revolutionaries were already at work.

He bounded up the steps, sword in hand, knocking aside those who impeded his progress. A terrified servant rushed up to him.

"Ah, Herr Captain! Quick! quick! . . . They will kill Fräulein Elsa! Hans and Fritz tried to stop them, but they cut them down. . . . Oh, you hear?" as a terrified scream rang through the house.

One of Werner's Creations appeared at the top of the stairs, bearing the struggling form of a woman in his arms. Arnould recognised one of the men of the regiment he had that morning incited to revolt.

"Ah, Herr Captain," shouted the man. "You have given us a merry *fête*; here is a tasty morsel I've captured!"

Arnauld stood before him, barring the way.

"Give me that girl at once!" he said, between his teeth. "Remember, I want some of the spoils."

An evil look crossed the man's face.

"Go and find a wench for yourself!" he said coarsely. There are plenty about; I don't see why I should give up this one. Here, you others," he shouted to his companions, who, loaded with booty, were descending the stairs, "here is the Herr Captain who wants the choicest bits for himself!"

A burst of laughter greeted this.

"The Herr Captain must go hunting for himself."

Arnauld ground his teeth in fury. If he fired at the man, it was probable he would wound Elsa, as the other would certainly use her as protection to himself. And, besides, the other men would be on him in a moment; he looked round in desperation. Then fate stepped in, and came to his aid.

There was an appalling crash, and he felt himself hurled against the pillar of the door, while everything seemed to be falling and crashing all round him. For a few minutes, he lay there, too stunned to move; then slowly his senses returned, and he staggered to his feet.

The bomb thrown by one of the revolutionary aeroplanes had completely wrecked the house. The bodies of Arnauld's late adversaries lay scattered about, huddled up in grotesque attitudes. Elsa lay hidden beneath the huge form of her captor, and a gleam of hope shot through Arnauld's heart that she might still be living.

He staggered across to where the two bodies lay. His clothing seemed to have been torn to shreds, and he was

bleeding profusely from a deep wound in his head. But, with a gigantic effort, he managed to pull the body of the man aside, and lifted her up. There was no sign of life in Elsa's limp body. He put his hand over her heart. It was still.

For a moment, he stood looking down on the still white face resting on his shoulder. Then a terrible curse broke from his lips: "God, curse them eternally! God, curse them! . . ."

Then he stopped, and laughed wildly. Fool to be calling on God to curse the murderers! He had been taught there *was* no God. If God existed, a just God, not some fiend of malice and cruelty, Elsa would not be lying dead in his arms.

His mad, strident laughter rang out again, as, with her body clasped closely to his breast, he rushed out of the ruined house to the private hangar and landing-ground belonging to the Rosenbergs. A small two-seater 'plane stood ready for use. Arnould strapped the body of Elsa to the seat, and, jumping in, set the engine in motion. The 'plane glided steadily upwards until they were flying well over the city, and far above the fighting 'planes with which the revolutionaries were attacking the city.

He looked down; flames shot up from every quarter. Seen from that height, the city appeared to be one vast bonfire. To-morrow, Berlin would be a heap of ruins. . . .

As the 'plane passed over the outskirts of the town, Arnould noticed some little puffs of white smoke beneath him. He looked down, and realised that he was being fired at; he touched a lever, and the 'plane rose still higher. Then, suddenly, he felt a terrific blow, and a pain like that of a red-hot iron went through his right arm.

"Ah! They've got me!" he muttered, as his arm swung

uselessly beside him. With his left hand, he turned the machine towards the East, and soon they were flying over the open country. He turned and looked at the woman beside him. Her head had rolled back against the seat, and, in the moonlight, she looked asleep.

Again he laughed that maniacal laugh which had echoed through the ruined house of the Rosenbergs.

"You see, *Liebling*," he shouted above the din of the engine. "We've beaten them after all! I said you were mine, mine, mine!" His voice rose to a yell. "Nothing on earth can separate us now. Not the Emperor, nor God, nor the Devil, if they exist, can come between us. Elsa, look! What a night, our wedding night: you and I alone in the sky!"

Away, towards the Dawn, a silver streak came nearer and nearer, and soon the 'plane was flying low over the cold grey waters of the Baltic. But the man in the gondola saw nothing; he lay with his head resting on the breast of the woman he loved.

And as the aeroplane slowly sank, and floated for a while on the surface of the sea, the waves closed around them and claimed their own.

FINIS.







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